

*The Ramayana in
Telugu and Tamil
A Comparative Study*



C.R. SARMA

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The Ramayana in Telugu and Tamil

A Comparative Study

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The Ramayana in Telugu and Tamil - A Comparative Study
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To My Parents

**Yasodamma
Lakshminarayana Sastri**

In Memoriam

PREFACE (2nd Edition)

My Ph. D. thesis *The Ramayana in Telugu and Tamil* was first published in 1973 when it was considered as one of the pioneering works in the field of Comparative Literature with special reference to the Ranganatha and Kamba Ramayanas in Telugur and Tamil respectively. The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, Tirupati, has recently granted me financial assistance under the 'Aid to Authors scheme' and their liberal grant has enabled me to bring out the second edition of the book after a lapse of two decades. Since then several valuable works on the Ramayana - original poems and translations, critiques, theses and the like - did see the light of the day, proving the fact that the Ramayana literature is endless (*anantakam*). Still I humbly feel that my book is worth studying as it gives useful information about the age - old classic in general and the outstanding Ramayanas in Telugu and Tamil in particular.

I take this opportunity to express my grateful thanks to the T T Devasthanams for their financial grant and also to the readers of the first edition for their encouragement.

My heartfelt thanks are also due to my friend Sri S. Kannappan, Reader in English, ICC & CE, Madurai Kamaraj University for his valuable suggestions, to M/s. Priya Printers, Madurai for their neat execution and to Sri Soundararajan, artist for the design and laser typesetted by Thirumagal laser printz, Madurai - 20.

Madurai
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C.R. Sarma

PREFACE (1st Edition)

As the Telugu and Tamil languages belong to the same linguistic group, some common elements appear in their literatures as well. Despite the fact that there have been sporadic and occasional references to these elements in some articles and prefaces, there has not been so far any critical and comprehensive study, comparing the two literatures. Such a study, it is believed, will not only be rewarding in itself but will also provide a bridge of better understanding and appreciation of two of India's great literatures.

This study, for the first time, seeks to compare the major Ramayanas available in Telugu and Tamil, written by earlier poets, with special reference to *Ranganatha Ramayanam* in Telugu and *Kamba Ramayanam* in Tamil. These two Ramayanas are not only considered outstanding works on the subject, but also regarded as inspiring source books for later poets in Telugu and Tamil.

The study is mainly intended to indicate the development of the Ramayana literature in Telugu and Tamil by showing in as clear a manner as possible the common as well as divergent lines of rendering in relation to the Sanskrit original.

It is revealed that the influence of the Ramayana on Telugu and Tamil literatures has been pervasive, enduring and continuous. The very fact that several works dealing with the Rama theme are available in Telugu and Tamil (*Appendices I and II*) is a supporting evidence to the influence of the Ramayana on these languages. That the story is also preserved in proverbs and similes and has a profound influence on some of our traditional beliefs is also worth mentioning. Though some proverbs may not be very old, still they indicate the tremendous popularity of the story among masses. Hence the influence of the Ramayana is both literary and cultural, as it has provided themes of absorbing interest to the writers, old and modern, and the different personae of the Ramayana are associated with our customs and beliefs. Even as Rama and Sita have been respectively regarded as synonyms for absolute reverence towards elders and

chastity, so also other characters such as Hanuman, Guha, Sugriva and Bharata have come to symbolise in popular imagination the virtues and values of unquestioned faith and devotion, deep and unfailing friendship and an ideal brotherly relationship. The spirit of the Ramayana story is thus kept alive.

A few new stories or details which are not found in Valmiki are found in both *Ranganatha Ramayanam* and *Kamba Ramayanam* ; and these deviations or interpolations of new stories were made with a view to adding some more qualities to the characters already created by Valmiki. The deviations appear to me justifiable as they have a purpose behind them . Further, both the Telugu and Tamil poets have approached the subject with great devotion, keeping at the same time their individuality undiminished. They are more sympathetic towards the minor characters in the story.

The message of the *Kamba Ramayanam* seems to be one of universal brotherhood while that of the *Ranganatha Ramayanam* is the possibility of receiving God's blessings through devotion.

I am grateful to the authorities of the University of Madras for allowing me to work on the subject independently and also to publish the thesis.

My grateful thanks are also due to the Government of Andhra Pradesh for giving me financial assistance to bring out the book.

I express my grateful thanks to Dr. A.V. Krishna Rao for kindly going through the manuscript and suggesting improvements; to Sri T.S. Kothandaram and Sri Thambi Srinivasan for helping me in

Madras,
May 1973

C.R. Sarma

Chapter I

Ramayana, The National Epic

Age of the Ramayana

The Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the two immortal epics, not only form the basis of Indian culture but also provide inspiration to the writers, ancient and modern, in almost all the languages of the country. The significance of these epics is three-fold — literary, religious and ethical. The Ramayana is called *Vedasama*¹, equal to the *Veda* while the Mahabharata is known as *Panchama Veda*, the fifth *Veda*. 'These works are India'².

The Ramayana is generally regarded as the first poem in Sanskrit literature and its author Valmiki, the first poet, who was also known as Bhargava and Prachetasa. The importance of this great epic lies in the fact that it is at once a great biography of a great hero Rama, the God-incarnate, and also a poem of unsurpassed beauty. 'Probably, no work of world literature secular in its origin, has ever produced so profound an influence on the life and thought of a people as the Ramayana,' says A. A. Macdonell³.

The genesis of the Ramayana story probably lies in the *Rig*

¹ According to the traditional *sloka*, '*Vedavedye parepumsi*', Rama is regarded as Supreme Soul and the Ramayana a form of the *Veda*.

Also see Vavilicolanu Subba Row (tr.) *Srimat Andhra Valmiki Ramayanamu* (Angalakuduru, Kodandarama Asram), 1909, Preface, p. xivji '*Ramayanam Vedasamam Sraddheshu Sravayed budhah*').

² Suniti Kumar Chatterji, *Languages and Literatures of Modern India* (Calcutta, Bengal Publishers Private Limited), 1963, Introduction, p. xv.

³ James Hastings (ed.), article on the Ramayana, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark), Vol. X, 3rd impression, 1952, pp.574-578.

Veda in the fight between Indra and Vritrasura, Sita being mentioned as the goddess of agriculture. But this reference is apparently too faint to be regarded seriously, for the story of the Ramayana as such has not been given in any recognisable form⁴.

Although Valmiki is traditionally believed to be the author of the Ramayana in its present form, he is, according to the modern research findings, credited with the authorship of only five books (II to VI). It was probably composed in the third century B.C. on the basis of some ancient ballads current in those days⁵. In other words, the first book, *Bala kanda* and the seventh book, *Uttara kanda*, are later interpolations and that the Ramayana has not come down to us in its purest original form.

Regarding the composition of the original Ramayana, T. R. Sesha Iyengar says: 'The original Ramayana was composed when the ancient Ayodhya had not yet been destroyed, but was still the chief city of Kosala, when its new name Saketa was unknown, and before the seat of government was transferred to Sravasti'⁶.

C. V. Vaidya perceptively remarks: 'It essentially belongs to that ancient period of Indian history when sacrifice was the most distinguishing feature of Aryan worship, when Buddhism was unknown, when idol-worship did not exist, when Brahmins and Kshatriyas freely ate animal food, when women learnt the Vedas and performed Vedic rites, when Kshatriyas competed with Brahmins in learning and Brahmins competed with Kshatriyas in archery'⁷.

Some of the traditional scholars too feel that the present version of the Ramayana is a later development of the original Ramayana which was concise. It is believed that Valmiki, the Prakrit grammarian who is said to have lived in the second century A.D., may have developed the brief story of the original Ramayana into a big epic. It is also suggested that the present Ramayana was composed on the basis of the original Ramayana and the *Ramopakhyana* (story of Rama), as found in the *Vana parva* of the

⁴ A. D. Pusalkar, *Studies in the Epics and Puranas of India*, 1955, introduction, p. XL.

⁵ Ibid, p. XI.

⁶ *Dravidian India* (Madras, C. Coomaraswamy Naidu & Sons), 1933, pp. 12-13.

⁷ *The Riddle of the Ramayana* (Bombay, Mrs. Radhabai Atmaram Sagoon), 1906, p. 9.

Mahabharata (chapters 273-291)⁸. Macdonell also felt that the Ramayana 'attained its present extent by the end of the second century A.D.⁹.

Varied are the views expressed by the scholars, both in the East and the West regarding the period of the original Ramayana¹⁰. However, the critical consensus suggests the 3rd century B.C. as the probable period¹¹.

The *Ramopakhyana* of the Mahabharata also deserves a careful study since it is believed to have given an 'incentive to the recasting of the Ramayana of Valmiki itself, in accordance with the new theory of Rama's being an *Avatara* of Vishnu'¹². It represents Rama as an incarnation of Vishnu and Sita as Janaka's own daughter. She did not enter fire to prove her chastity. Further, the stories of the *Uttara kanda* are not mentioned in it. In view of the above, it is believed that the *Ramopakhyana* may have helped in recasting the Ramayana story.

The Buddhist and the Jain traditions

The other versions of the story of Rama, though different from the story as told by Valmiki, that deserve mention are the ancient texts of the Buddhists and the Jains.

According to the *Dasaratha Jataka*, a Buddhist text of about 5th century B.C., Dasaratha was the king of Varanasi (Benares) and to his chief queen were born three children, namely, Rama Pandita (Rama the wise), Lakkhana Kumara and Sita Devi. After the death of this queen, the king married another. Bharata

⁸ Pendyala Venkata Subrahmanya Sastri, preface to Suravaram Pratapa Reddi's *Ramayana Viseshamulu* (Hyderabad, Andhra Rachayitala Sangham), 1957, p. 3.

⁹ *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. X, Article on the Ramayana, 3rd impression, pp. 574-578.

¹⁰ Sir William Jones	... 2029 B.C.
Tod	... 1100 B.C.
Bentley	... 950 B.C.
Gorresio	... About 13th century B.C.
Prof. Jacobi	... Between 6th and 8th century B.C.
Winternitz	... 3rd century B.C.
Macdonell	... About 7th century B.C.
A. B. Keith	... A little before 3rd century B.C.

¹¹ *Dravidian India*, pp. 14-15.

¹² *The Riddle of the Ramayana*, p. 26.

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¹¹ *Dravidian India*, pp. 14-15.

¹² *The Riddle of the Ramayana*, p. 26.

was born to her. The new queen persuaded the king to give the kingdom to her son. Fearing that Rama, Lakkhana Kumara and Sita would be put to trouble by the queen, if they were to stay with him, the king asked them to stay at some other place for a period of twelve years. Accordingly, they went to the Himalayas, where they lived in a hermitage. It was also predicted that the king would die in about twelve years. But after nine years, Dasaratha died. Then, the queen tried to put Bharata on the throne. But he rejected it and went to the hermitage where Rama lived and urged him to return to Varanasi; but Rama would not. Instead, he gave Bharata his wooden sandals saying that they would rule the kingdom. At the end of the twelfth year, Rama returned to the capital. He was then made king with Sita as his queen. They ruled for 16,000 years.

It is interesting to note in the above tale that the story of Ravana is absent and that Sita was married to her brother Rama.

Of the two Jain versions of the Ramayana, *Paumachariya* written by Vimalasuri is considered the most popular and the earliest; the other being *Trishashtisalakapurusha Charita* by Hemachandra. Though the general outline of the story in the *Paumachariya* is the same as found in Valmiki's Ramayana (VR), several deviations from the original are noticed in it. It is said that its influence is 'marked on the Padmapurana, Adhyatma Ramayana, Ananda Ramayana, Tulasi Ramayana and his other works, Seri Rama of Malaya and Ramakiyen of Syama'¹³.

According to S. K. Belvalkar, the *Paumachariya* gives the story of Rama in three different places with variations in each place¹⁴.

Of the salient features of the Jain versions, the following may be mentioned.

All the characters including Dasaratha, Rama, Ravana, Hanuman and their families are Jains. Rama like all Baladevas had eight thousand wives with Sita, Prabhavati and Sridama as the chief queens. Lakshmana, a Vasudeva, too was polygamous. He had sixteen thousand wives. He killed Ravana with his

¹³ K. R. Chandra, 'Extent of the influence of the Rama story of Paumachariyam, *Journal of the Oriental Institute* (M.S. University of Baroda), March-June, 1966, pp. 341-349.

¹⁴ *Rama's Later History* (Uttara Rama Carita), (Harvard Oriental Series), 1915, introduction, pp. XLVII-LXIII.

Chakra. Rama was a great human hero. He abstained from taking meat. He killed Vali in a straight fight. Further, there is no mention of Maricha or the golden deer. Ravana had only one head and he abducted Sita when Rama was engaged in a battle.

There existed a friendly relationship between the *Vanaras* and the *Rakshasas*. The *Vanaras* were of considerable assistance to Ravana in battles. Hanuman married Satyavati, the daughter of Ravana and also Anantakusuma, daughter of Surpanakha. Sita was not found in the furrow of the plough; her mother was Videha. At last, she became a Jain nun.

From these three versions, it can be seen that Sita has been mentioned as the foster-daughter of the king Janaka according to the Hindu tradition, daughter of Dasaratha as in the Buddhist tradition, and the own daughter of Janaka according to the Jain tradition. Rama is regarded as an incarnation of Vishnu by the Hindus, as Bodhisatva by the Buddhists and as a Baladeva by the Jains. Thus, Buddhism and Jainism too have claimed Rama as a follower of their religions and moulded his story to suit their doctrines.

Ramayana in the Puranas

The Ramayana story is also found in the following works with slightly different versions:—

1. Purvadharmakhanda
2. Uttaradharmakhanda
3. Padma Purana
4. Ramatapanyupanishat
5. Hiranyagarbhas Samhita
6. Umagastya Samhita
7. Bhagavata
8. Adhyatma Ramayana
9. Vishnu Purana
10. Kurma Purana
11. Seshadharma
12. Skanda Purana
13. Mastya Purana
14. Garuda Purana
15. Vishnuyamila

16. Mokshakhanda

17. Tatvasangraha Ramayana

It can be seen from the above that the story of Rama was so popular that it found a permanent place in several *puranas* also besides several plays and poems in Sanskrit. However, it may be said that each *purana* has followed its own way in telling the details, being faithful to the main story as found in VR. Hence, some deviations from the original are noticeable in the *puranas*. For instance, *Agni Purana* does not speak of the emancipation of Ahalya, an episode of considerable importance in the Ramayana¹⁵.

The so-called Greek influence

The Ramayana, which has been accepted as a *kavya*, is also interpreted as a *mantra sastra* by some of the traditional scholars. According to some western scholars, the war that took place between Rama and Ravana is only a poetic version of the conflict between Brahmanism and Buddhism in the South¹⁶. Some were of the view that the Ramayana story is an allegorical representation of the Aryan conquest of the south or the expansion of the Aryan culture in the south¹⁷ which seems to be plausible in the light of the great synthesis of the Dravidian and Aryan cultures.

However a few scholars doubt the 'Indianness' of the Ramayana story¹⁸. One of them observes thus: '... the story of Rama, as related in the Indian epic, is a very faded and distorted copy of the history of the greatest Pharaoh of ancient Egypt, Rameses II' ¹⁹ who is said to have reigned from 1292-1225 B.C.

¹⁵ A. N. Krishna Aiyangar, 'Agnipurana and the Ramayana', *Bharatiya Vidya*, Vol. XXV, Nos. 1 & 2, 1965, pp. 9-17.

¹⁶ This is the opinion of Talboys Wheeler (vide C. V. Vaidya's *The Riddle of the Ramayana*, p. 63). 'This does not appear to be true. J. Muir in his note, 'Prof. Lassen on Weber's Dissertation on the Ramayana' says as follows: '.....attention must be recalled to the fact that in the Ramayana, with the exception of one single passage, no allusions to the Buddhists occur.'

¹⁷ *Studies in the Epics and Puranas of India*, Introduction.

¹⁸ Weber was the first to start this theory which has been ably refuted by K. T. Telang and others. Weber also said that the main characters of the Ramayana were not historical personages but only personifications of some events.

¹⁹ Malladi Venkata Ratnam, *Rama the great Pharaoh of Egypt*, Vol. II, 1934, p. 56.

The theory of the Greek influence on the Ramayana has been convincingly refuted by the western and Indian scholars. It is indeed noteworthy that some of the western scholars have declared that the Iliad of Homer is but an echo of the Ramayana²⁰.

Ramayana Abroad

In this connection, it may be mentioned that the Ramayana has travelled abroad also and it has been translated into several languages including English, Russian etc. It appears that the story of Rama reached Thailand and Combodia some centuries ago and it is known there by the names of Ramakien and Ramker respectively. It is also very popular in Java, Bali, Tibet, Indonesia (predominantly a Muslim country), Siam and other far-eastern countries. Of course, the story has undergone several changes and differs from the original in nomenclature also. In some versions, Sita has been mentioned as the daughter of Ravana. She is said to have married both Rama and Ravana. Mandodari is supposed to have married Dasaratha. Rama and Ravana are said to be cousins.

Despite the circulation of all these mutually contradictory versions, the version of Valmiki alone holds firm in the popular imagination even after several centuries. It is generally regarded as the most authentic version of the story of Rama and hence appropriately enough almost all the language versions are mainly based on it. This does not mean that the various language versions are mere literal translations of the Sanskrit original. In spite of some exact renderings of Valmiki here and there, most of the Ramayana poets in various Indian languages have either freely adapted or departed from the original story of Valmiki, resulting in so many interesting transcreations rather than merely formal translations.

Contemporaneity of Valmiki and Rama

The question often arises: Were Valmiki and Rama contemporaries? According to the tradition, Rama lived in the *Treta yuga* and Krishna in the *Dvapara yuga*. Each *Yuga* consists

²⁰ Jellicot, *Bible in India*, p. 32.

Regarding the so-called Greek influence of the Ramayana, S. K. Belvalkar has observed that 'it is now no more than a literary curiosity' (Vide his introduction to *Rama's Later History*).

of several lakhs of years. It is said that Rama lived for eleven thousand years. So, it is now difficult to say when exactly Rama lived on the basis of the traditional evidence.

According to the tradition, Valmiki was a contemporary of Rama. He is also believed to have given shelter to Sita, when she was banished by her husband. And he taught Lava and Kusa, the sons of Sita, his Ramayana poem and it was sung by them in the presence of Rama. Since these stories belong to the *Uttara kanda*, considered a later addition to the main epic, the truth of these episodes is open to doubt. Further, it is said that Valmiki came to know the story of Rama through the sage Narada. This supports the view that Rama may have preceded Valmiki, and that the story of Rama was already in vogue in some form or the other when Valmiki re-created it as a poem, that was to shape the minds and hearts of countless generations of men and women.

Whether Valmiki was a contemporary of Rama or not,²¹ the fact that the poet regarded Rama as a mortal *par excellence*, though he deified him in a few places, cannot be easily set aside. The deification of Rama as an incarnation of Vishnu, the Supreme deity, is believed to be the work of some later poets, for 'Vishnu was not the Supreme Being in the Vedic cult, and the doctrine of His *Avataras* is foreign to the Vedic theology'²². So, P. T. Srinivas Iyengar is of the view that the Ramayana of Rama's days must have been in the Vedic dialect ('candas' as Panini calls it) or in the Prakrit which was then current²³. Since Valmiki regarded Rama as a mortal of the highest order and since the later poets could only regard him as God-incarnate, it is felt that Valmiki, though not a contemporary of Rama, may have lived at a time when Rama was not yet considered an *avatar*.

Ramayana in Indian languages

'In the middle Ages,' says Macdonell, 'the Sanskrit epic was

²¹ It is said that one Chyavana might have written a Ramayana before Valmiki. It is interesting to note that this Chyavana and Valmiki belong to the same Bhṛigu clan.

Suravaram Pratapa Reddi, *Ramayana Viseshamulu*, pp. 4-6.

²² P. T. Srinivas Iyengar, *History of the Tamils* (Madras, C. Coomaraswamy Naidu & Sons), 1929, p. 45.

²³ Ibid, p. 44.

translated into the spoken languages of India, beginning with the Tamil version, which appeared at the beginning of the 12th century and was followed by adaptations and renderings in the vernaculars all over the country²⁴. This may be true, because almost all the major Indian languages have several Ramayana versions to their credit. Though Valmiki's Ramayana is the source-book for all these versions, still one can find in them several deviations from the original. This is, perhaps, due to the literary traditions of the various languages or the presence of non-Valmiki stories relating to Rama and other characters in vogue in the different parts of the country. Since the language versions are chiefly meant for those who are not acquainted with the Sanskrit Ramayana, the poets may have thought it better to include in their works such stories or details as were prevalent in their times with the sole object of satisfying the masses in particular and the average literates in general. Or, the poets may have consulted some versions of the Ramayana, different from Valmiki, which are not available at present.

A critical study of the various Ramayana versions available in the different languages of our country reveals the fact that every author deviates from the original in some place or the other. For instance, Divakaraprakasa Bhatta in his Kashmiri Ramayana has made several changes, the most important among them is: Sita is the daughter of Ravana²⁵. Krittivasa Ramayana in Bengali also presents some differences, one of them being the conversion of Rama into a gentle and compassionate incarnation of the Divinity²⁶.

The South Indian poets too have deviated from the original. The earliest Ramayana available in Kannada is that of Nagachandra, a Jain author, who is also known as *Abhinava Pampa*. This is believed to have been composed in the 12th century. Since Nagachandra followed the version of Vimalasuri, the Kannada rendering presents several differences. Rama was a *dharma nayaka* while Lakshmana who killed Ravana was a *vira nayaka*. Rama did not marry Sita after breaking the bow of Siva. She is described as Janaka's own daughter. She had a twin brother by

²⁴ *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. X, pp. 574-578.

²⁵ *Studies in the Epics and Puranas of India*, p. 179.

²⁶ *Languages and Literatures of Modern India*, p. 163.

name Prabhamandala. A new episode of Narada's desire for Sita is included whereas the original episodes of Parasurama, Visvamitra and Manthara are absent. Since Bharata was jealous of Rama and Lakshmana and since he wanted to become the king, his mother Kaikeyi urged Dasaratha to order Rama to go to forests. No reference to *Setubandhana* (construction of a bridge across the sea to Lanka) is found. Sugriva, Hanuman and their followers were not at all monkeys. They were only human beings, who had the emblem of a monkey on their banners²⁷. The Kannada poet took liberties with certain names also. For example, Rama's mother is mentioned as Aparajita and Satrugna's mother as Suprabha.

There are some more Ramayanas. But *Torave Ramayana* by Narahari (16th century) is a popular one in Kannada. Though Narahari followed Valmiki, he too deviated from the original at a few places. It is said that the Fire God took away half the portion of Sita, before her abduction by Ravana. In order to be on constant watch, Lakshmana keeps awake and fasts through out the exile period of fourteen years.

In Malayalam, *Adhyatma Ramayanam* by Ezuthacchan (16th century) is the most popular one. He is known as the prince of Malayalam poets and his work a priceless possession of the Malayalam language and literature²⁸. 'The practice which, enjoins on the people the reading of Ezuthacchan's Ramayana every day as a matter of obligatory religious duty still lingers in the nooks and corners of Malabar, in spite of the temptations of critical thought'²⁹. Though Ezuthacchan followed the *Adhyatma Ramayana* in Sanskrit, he also drew inspiration from Valmiki. We find his characters Rama, Ravana and others noble and dignified. His description of Rama is nothing but an ideal representation. It is worthy of note that Ezuthacchan's Ravana

²⁷ Edward P. Rice in his *History of Kanarese Literature* (Calcutta, The Heritage of India Series), 1921, has mentioned some more differences.

'The Rakshasas are only occasionally called by that name. They are generally styled Vidyadharas (i.e. beings having the power of movement through the air). In place of the supernatural and grotesque marvels of the Brahmanic story we have a natural and comparatively credible narrative ' (pp. 34-35).

²⁸ Chelvat Achyuta Menon, *Ezuthacchan and His Age* (University of Madras), 1940, p. 105.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 47.

not only considers Sita a paragon of beauty but also the divine spouse of Rama. While urging Sita to accept his love, Ravana is said to have spoken in a double sense, the worldly and the philosophical. In the worldly sense, Ravana requests Sita to accept his love on several grounds, one of which is Rama's indifference to her. But in the philosophical sense, Ravana recognises the greatness of Rama. His long appeal ends with the following lines:

‘ O Essence of loveliness, lotus - faced beauty,
I am falling at your lotus feet
Save me, save me, for ever ’³⁰.

These lines too can be interpreted in double sense. If interpreted philosophically, they mean that Ravana has surrendered himself to Sita (*saranagati*) and urged her to save him for ever.

While describing Sita's marriage to Rama, Ezuthacchan remembers that it is a divine union. He, however, ‘makes his Sita put the garland of glances on Rama before she puts on him the garland of marriage’³¹. True to the original, which is a sort of spiritualised version of the Ramayana in which Rama appears as God-incarnate, Ezuttacchan's work also depicts Rama as an ideal for Gods and human beings as well. Such interesting details are found in almost all the language versions.

It is worthy of note that in almost all the major Indian languages, the Ramayana appears to be a popular work. *Kamba Ramayanam* in Tamil, *Ranganatha Ramayanam* and *Bhaskara Ramayanam* in Telugu, *Torave Ramayanam* in Kannada, *Adhyatma Ramayanam* in Malayalam, *Krittivas Ramayana* in Bengali, *Bhavartha Ramayana* in Marathi and *Ramacharitamanas* in Hindi are some of the popular Ramayanas. *Ramacharitamanas* by Goswami Tulasidas is, perhaps, the most popular work in Hindi even to this day. The following passage from the Information Bulletin published by the UNESCO Regional Centre for reading materials in South Asia bears an evidence to this fact:

³⁰ *Ezuttacchan and His Age*, p. 120-21.

Ezuttacchan's Ravana says as follows ‘.....*Sumukhi, tava charana nalina dasosmyaham*.....’ *Adhyatma Ramayanam*, 1961, p. 153.

³¹ *Ibid*, p. 123.

'The most popular writer continues to be Goswami Tulasidas, for his *Ramacharit Manas*. Requested to mention the book of their choice the readers have mostly mentioned the name of *Ramacharit Manas*'³².

It is also said of Tulasi's Ramayan that it is appreciated even by the unlettered when sung in the form of *bhajan*.

In this connection, it may also be mentioned that Valmiki is held in high esteem by the Telugu poets, ancient and modern. Several poets in their 'Salutation to the poets' (*Kavistuti*) had referred to Valmiki along with other masters of poetry. Raghunatha Nayak of Tanjore who reigned from 1600-1631 wrote a poem on Valmiki entitled *Valmiki Charitram*.

The Tamil poet Kamban too had great regard for Valmiki. While describing the Kosala country, he said that Valmiki had written the Ramayana in such a manner that it could be appreciated and enjoyed even by the celestial beings. As such, his (Kamban's) attempt looked like the prattle of a dumb man under the influence of a drink³³.

It is said that there was a Tamil poet by name Vanmikiyar who is said to have lived during the first Sangam³⁴. It is also believed that Valmiki lived for some time in a place called Tiruvannmiyur near Madras³⁵.

Thus the Ramayana of Valmiki has inspired several poets in the different languages of our country. It is worthy of note that the modern writers also draw inspiration from this *adikavya* though some of them have questioned a few details or episodes narrated in the poem³⁶. Perhaps, it is their critical outlook that has made them express those doubts. Even those who are not inclined to

³² Vol. VII, No. 3, October, 1965.

³³ KR, 1-2-1.

³⁴ Mu. Raghava Iyengar, *Araicchit tokuti* (Madras, Pari Nilaiyam), 2nd edn., 1964, p. 15.

³⁵ 'Tiruvannmiyur is not only famous as a Siva shrine but it is also reported to be a place where Valmiki Rishi, the author of the immortal Ramayana, lived for many years.' K. E. Parthasarathi, 'Monument to a great Tamil Scholar', *The Sunday Standard*, 9-4-1967.

³⁶ Suniti Kumar Chatterji in his *Languages and Literatures of Modern India* says as follows: 'Indian life and thought and Indian literature in ancient, mediaeval and modern times (until very recently) have remained imbedded in the Ramayana, the Mahabharata.....' (introduction, p. XIV.)

regard Rama as God-incarnate, also feel that Rama is a great hero. Further, Rama appears to be the first king in the history of our country who has travelled all the way from the north to the south and made friendship with persons like Guha and the *Vanaras* belonging to the non-Aryan tribes. It may also be mentioned that Rama must have been responsible for the coinage of the happy phrase *Asetu Himachalam*, meaning 'from the *setu* (the bridge constructed across the sea) to the Himalayas.' Thus the story of Rama has brought the Aryan and the non-Aryan tribes nearer and the country — both the south and the north — into one picture³⁷. Hence, the Ramayana may be called the national epic, the story being purely Indian and the characters representing the highest ideals enshrined in the country's ancient scriptures, namely the *Vedas*. Further, the different characters of the epic, whether historical personages or not, are remembered even to this day. Some of the characters like Rama, Sita and Hanuman are worshipped to this day. It is said that there is also a temple dedicated to Sita in Ceylon³⁸. The Ramayana, therefore, is not regarded as a piece of dead mythology, but as a living epic. As S. K. Belvalkar puts it, the Ramayana is a blending of history and some allegory³⁹. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri has aptly described the epic as 'an essentially human document'⁴⁰.

³⁷ The observation of C. Rajagopalachari is worth quoting here. 'Let us keep ever in our minds the fact that it is the Ramayana and the Mahabharata that bind our vast members together as one people, despite caste, space and language that seemingly divide them.' Preface to the 3rd edition of his *Ramayana* (Bombay, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan) 5th edn., 1965, p. 10.

³⁸ N. Ramakrishna in his article 'Hakgala Garden in Ceylon' published in *The Hindu*, Sunday edn., January 8, 1967 says as follows: 'It is said and believed that Ravana captured Sita and kept her a captive at Sita Eliya a place on the road to the garden from Nuwara Eliya. There is a temple dedicated to Sita on the roadside, inside which there are idols dedicated to Rama, Lakshmana, Sita and Hanuman. The place was once the famous Asoka Vanam and one sees huge Asoka trees in the vicinity and in the Hakgala garden.'

³⁹ *Rama's Later History*, introduction.

⁴⁰ *Lectures on the Ramayana*, 1949, p. 490.

Chapter II

The Ramayana in Tamil

Rama and the South

As already mentioned, the story of Rama has not only significantly contributed to the integration of the Aryan and the non-Aryan tribes but also imaginatively unified the northern and the southern parts of the country into one picture. It accelerated the process of assimilation of the Aryan and the non-Aryan or Dravidian customs. It is popularly believed that even before Rama's time, the Aryan cults found their way to the south¹. Hanuman is said to have mastered Sanskrit and he was considered a great Sanskrit grammarian². It is also said that he wrote a Ramayana in Sanskrit and it is called *Hanuman Nataka*.

According to V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar, the *Vanaras* had been Aryanised much sooner than the other tribes³.

As a result of the cultural assimilation, some of the Dravidian

¹ *History of the Tamils*, pp. 55-58.

² *Ibid.* p. 51.

There is a traditional story saying that Hanuman had written a Ramayana in Sanskrit. The story says that when Hanuman requested Rama to give his opinion about his work, Rama replied with a roar of laughter that, Hanuman had written his own story since he had played an important part in the story. Then Hanuman threw into the sea the stones on which he wrote his Ramayana and later they were found by the king Bhoja.

Though we can summarily dismiss the above account, still the fact that Hanuman had learnt Sanskrit and mastered it is worthy of note.

³ 'South India in the Ramayana,' *Proceedings and Transactions of the Seventh All-India Oriental Conference*, Baroda, 1935.

customs also spread to the north and the Dravidian Gods were recognised by the Aryans⁴.

It is no wonder, therefore, that the story of Rama should find a permanent place in the South Indian languages along with other Sanskrit classics.

The contribution of the South Indian scholars in propagating the Valmiki Ramayana deserves special mention. There are many commentaries in Sanskrit on the Ramayana and most of the commentators including the famous Govindaraja hail from the South⁵.

It may be mentioned that the Southern Recension of the Valmiki Ramayana is generally regarded as an authentic version of the poem, as the original form is preserved in it⁶.

The fact that the story of the Ramayana has been popular in the Tamil country can be proved from the several proverbs current among the people. These proverbs born out of long experience, not only reflect the people's mind but also preserve some of the interesting episodes of the Ramayana. A few of them are given below.

1. Vallavanukku-p-pullum ayutam

(Even a blade of grass is an instrument to a strong man)

This suggests the *kakasura* episode wherein Rama threw a blade of grass and subdued the evil-minded Jayanta, the son of Indra, who approached Sita in the form of a crow. It went as a sharp shaft and chased him.

2. Vadakke pona kuranku varavillai

(The monkey that has gone to the north did not return)

Monkeys were sent to the four directions to find out the whereabouts of Sita. It is only Hanuman, who went to the southern direction that returned and reported to Rama the happy news that Sita was found in Lanka.

⁴ T. R. Sessa Iyengar, in his *Dravidian India* has discussed this point at great length. He says: "Besides Siva, other deities of the South were absorbed into the Aryan Pantheon". (p. 114)

C. Ramalinga Reddi in his foreward to the book has observed: "..... if we received, we also gave, that what assimilation there has been mutual and not one-sided, and that the Hindu civilisation of to-day is the common heritage of both (the Aryans and the Dravidians)", p. IX.

⁵ G. H. Bhatt, 'Ramayana commentaries', *Journal of the Oriental Institute*, (M.S. University of Baroda), March-June, 1965, p. 353.

⁶ G. H. Bhatt, (ed.), *The Valmiki Ramayana*, Vol. I—Bala Kanda, introduction, p. XIII.

3. **Vidiya vidiya Ramayanam kettu Ramanukku Sitai enna akavenum ennu kettanam**

(It is like some one asking, 'What was Sita to Rama', after hearing the Ramayana story)

There is a similar proverb in Telugu also. Since Sita has been described in the Jain Ramayana as both sister and wife of Rama, some one may have asked this question, perhaps, to express his doubt as to the correctness of the different versions of the story.

4. **Kurivikketra Ramacaram**

(The shaft of Rama suitable for the bird)

This too, perhaps, refers to the *kakasura* episode.

5. **Cittukkurivikku Ramabanama?**

(What! the shaft of Rama on the sparrow?)

There is a similar proverb in Telugu: *Pitchuka mida Brahmastrama?*

This also refers to the *kakasura* episode and this proverb is generally used to denote that a big assault has been made on a small thing.

Story of Rama and the Sangam age

It appears that a few stories based on the story of the Ramayana were prevalent in the Tamil country even during the Sangam age. According to the tradition and scholars, Sangam age is the earliest period in the literary history of Tamil. The traditional account mentions the formation of three Sangams or Academies at the three capitals of the Pandyas, namely, Madurai, which was swallowed by the sea, Kapatapuram and the modern Madurai respectively.⁷

Though the truth of this legendary account has been questioned,⁸ it is said that it may represent the ideal of a literary academy presiding over the development of the language, at a later time there may have been a nostalgic feeling of a golden era of the *pāṣṭ*.⁹ Whatever the different theories may be regarding

⁷ *History of the Tamils*, p. 239.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 252.

⁹ T. P. Meenakshisundaran, *A History of Tamil Literature* (Annamalainagar, Annamalai University), 1965, p. 9.

the date of the Sangam age, it is suggested that it may be assigned to the first three centuries of the Christian era.¹⁰

Among the Sangam works, *Akananuru*, *Purananuru* and others deserve special mention. In one of the verses in *Akananuru*, it is stated that when Rama, sitting under a banyan tree in Dhanushkoti, was discussing with his followers the attack on Ravana, the birds on the tree made such a huge noise that it interrupted the deliberations. Then Rama had to silence them.¹¹ This, perhaps, suggests that every one including the sub-human species stood on the side of Rama and tried to help him.

Purananuru has an interesting verse describing the joy of the monkeys who wore jewels dropped by Sita from the air when she was being carried away by Ravana.¹²

In one of the verses in *Kalittokai*, the story of Ravana with 'heads double of five' lifting the Himalayas, the abode of Siva and Uma and as a result getting crushed under that mighty mountain is told.¹³ *Paripatal* has a verse describing the episode of Ahalya.¹⁴ Indra is described as a *pusai*, meaning cat, because of his disguise as a cat. Thus it supports the traditional story of Ahalya as current in the Tamil country.¹⁵

It is also believed that a Ramayana must have been in vogue in the Sangam age itself; but it is not extant now.¹⁶

¹⁰ A History of Tamil Literature, p. 17.

Mu. Raghava Iyengar has brought the Sangam age to the fifth century A.D. See S. Vaiyapuri Pillai's *History of Tamil language and literature* (Madras, N.C.B.H. Pvt. Ltd.), 1956, p. 142.

¹¹ *Akananuru*, 70, 1, 13-16.

¹² *Purananuru*, 378, 1, 18-21.

¹³ *Kalittokai*, 38.

There is also a legendary tale saying that the sage Agattiyar, by his music, made the Podiyil hill melt and sent Ravana to Lanka who ill-treated his subjects. S. Vaiyapuri Pillai, *Kaviya Kalam* (Madras, Tamil Puttakalayam), 2nd edn., 1962, p. 79.

¹⁴ *Paripatal*, 19.

Though some would assign this work to a period later than the Sangam age, it has been proved that the authors of *Paripatal* lived towards the end of the 3rd century A.D. See M. Rajamanikkam's article 'The Date of Paripatal', *Annals of Oriental Research* (University of Madras), Vol. XXI, pt. I, p. 17.

¹⁵ It may be noted that in the Telugu versions of the Ramayana, Indra has been described as a cock.

¹⁶ Na. Mu. Venkatasami Nattar, 'Kambar Kattum Olukkancerikalir cila', *Kamban Malar* (Madras), 3rd edn., 1965, p. 20.

This corroborates the view, nevertheless, that the story of Rama was very popular among the Tamils even in the Sangam age.

According to S. Vaiyapuri Pillai, a few Ramayanas might have existed in Tamil long before Kamban wrote his immortal work. The reasons he has given are:

- (1) The commentary on Yapparunkalam mentions one Ramayana composed in *venba* metre.
- (2) Nacchinarkkiniyar in his commentary on *Tolkappiyam* mentions one verse taken from a Ramayana.
- (3) Four verses describing the story of Rama belonging to Asiriyamalai have been given in *Purattirattu*.¹⁷

It is generally held that the earliest Ramayana was probably composed in the *venba* metre and that it may be assigned to 650 A.D.¹⁸ Mu. Raghava Iyengar is of the view that the Ramayana was also called *Cīramakatai* (the story of Sri Rama) in olden days and that a Ramayana, perhaps, written in the *venba* metre like that of Perundevanar's Bharatam, may have existed long before Kamban.¹⁹

It is worth mentioning that several places, sacred hills and tanks in the Tamil land appear to have an interesting mnemonic connection with Rama or the story of the Ramayana. The *sthala puranas* (legendary accounts of the holy shrines) also contain stories connected with Rama and other characters of the Ramayana.²⁰

Story of Rama in later works

The well-known twin classics — *Cilappatikaram* (the story of the anklet) and *Maṇimekalai* also contain a few references to the Ramayana story. The *Cilappatikaram* says that after Kovalan's departure from the city of Pukar, the city resembles Ayodhya without Rama.²¹

Kovalan with his devoted wife Kannaki reaches the

¹⁷ *Kaviya Kalam*, pp. 83-84.

¹⁸ *History of Tamil language and Literature*, pp. 103-104.

¹⁹ *Araicchit tokuti*, p. 16.

²⁰ *Kamba Ramayanam*—Bala Kandam, (Madras, Murray & Co.), 1959, introduction, p. 4.

²¹ *Puranci irutta Katai*, 1, 64-66.

outskirts of the city of Madurai. Before he sets forth to the city, he requests his guide and philosopher Kavunti Adigal (a Jain nun) to look after his wife till he returns. Then Kavunti Adigal, consoles him by saying that Rama and Nala, in the past, had suffered separation from their wives.²² Rama, referred to as the lord of the Vedas, is also described as the incarnation of Lord Vishnu.²³

In *Manimekalai*, there is a reference to the story of the monkeys who threw big mountains into the sea and thus helped Rama in the construction of the causeway (*setu*) across the sea.²⁴ It is generally said that this *setu* was constructed at the modern Dhanushkoti. But Mu. Raghava Iyengar is of the view that it meant Kanyakumari. Commenting on Cittalai Cattamar's (author of *Manimekalai*) observation 'Kuranku ceykadar kumariyam perunturai', Raghava Iyengar writes that Kanyakumari was the starting point of the Rama's *setu*. According to him, it is called *adi setu* (first setu) while Dhanushkoti is *madhya setu* (second setu). It is obvious from *Cilappatikaram* and other Tamil works that Kumari was regarded as a holy place where several people from different parts of the country flocked together and took bath in the holy waters of the sea in the belief that their sins would be eradicated. It is only in later times that Dhanushkoti came into prominence. The Tamil equivalent for the Sanskrit phrase *Asetuhimachalam* is *Kumari mutal Imayam varai* and this also supports the fact that the *setu* meant Kumari. Thus the above reference, connected with the Ramayana story, is of worthy consideration.²⁵

It is interesting to note that some of the above mentioned stories, which are not found in Valmiki's work, are told in the form of similes which show that the story of Rama was popular among the Tamils, though a complete version of it was not available till the time of Kamban. However, Tamil scholars feel that the Ramayana was not so popular as the Mahabharata in the Sangam age;²⁶ but the position appears to have completely changed as years passed by and especially after Kamba Ramayanam came

²² *Ur Kan Katai*, 1, 46-49.

²³ *Ibid*, *Aycciyar Kuravai*, 35.

²⁴ *Ulakavaravipukka Katai*, 1, 9-12.

²⁵ *Araicchi-tokuti*, pp. 30-34.

²⁶ *Kaviya Kalam*, pp. 79.

to light, since Kamban and his work have always been held in high esteem by one and all.

Jain Ramayana

The contribution of the Jain scholars to the Tamil language and literature is noteworthy. Among the several Jain works, *Cilappatikaram* and *Jivakachintamani* deserve special mention. It is generally said that Kamban was much influenced by the latter work. M. S. Poornalingam Pillai has observed: 'There is a tradition that Kamban's Ramayana owes much of its excellence and many of its beauties to this memorable epic'.²⁷

It appears that there must have existed in Tamil a Jain version of the Ramayana. But, unfortunately, it has not been preserved. *Sripuranam*, a later work dealing with the lives of the sixty-three great men of the Jain mythology contains an account of Rama in the story of Muniswaraswamy, the twentieth Tirthankara. The author has quoted in the story a few verses describing the sorrow of Sita. Since the style of these verses differs from that of *Sripuranam*, it is believed that these verses belong to a Ramayana, probably of the Jain Ramayana, which is not available now.²⁸ The story as found in the Jain version of the Ramayana in Tamil is outlined below:

Dasaratha, king of Kasi in the beginning and later of Ayodhya, had four children — Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata and Satrugna. Janaka, the king of Videha, requested Dasaratha to send Rama to the *Yaga* to be performed by him. Dasaratha complied with his wish. Rama married Sita there. Afterwards, Dasaratha made the young couple to stay at Kasi.

One day, Rama, Lakshmana and Sita went to Chitrakuta to enjoy the forest life. Then the sage Narada happened to visit them. But Rama was not aware of the visit of the sage and hence he could not pay his due respect to him. Enraged by this lapse of Rama, Narada went to Ravana and apprised him of the ravishing beauty of Sita. After hearing the sage, Ravana became very much enamoured of Sita. Accompanied by Maricha, he went to Chitrakuta and carried away Sita.

²⁷ *Tamil Literature* (Tirunelveli), 1928, p. 187.

Also refer to *Kaviya Kalam*, p. 178.

²⁸ *Kamban Kaviyam*, pp. 29-33.

Dasaratha, who was then in Ayodhya, came to know of the abduction of Sita and at once sent some messengers to console Rama. Kausalya, Bharata, Sugriva, Anumahan (Hanumanta) and other Vidyadharas also visited Rama.

Later, Anumahan found out the whereabouts of Sita and reported to Rama. Afterwards, he was sent to the city of Ravana as Rama's messenger.

Meanwhile, Vali expressed his desire to join the company of Rama; but the latter did not grant his request. A quarrel took place between Vali and Sugriva, in which the former was killed by Lakshmana. Vibhishana, the brother of Ravana, also joined Rama.

In the great war that took place between Ravana and other Vidyadharas and Rama, Lakshmana killed Ravana and his followers. Afterwards, Rama took *diksha* and finally attained *moksha* (salvation). Anumahan and others also took *diksha*. But Lakshmana alone went to hell (*naraka*).

Story of Rama and the Alvars

By the time the Alvars, the Vaishnava saints, began to sing their devotional and soul-filling hymns in praise of Lord Vishnu, Rama the ideal man of Valmiki, came to be regarded as the very incarnation of Vishnu. Thus the Ramayana, essentially a poem, became a religious work also.

Though the Alvars were very much captivated by the various episodes describing the descent of Krishna (Krishnavatara)²⁹ they had also great reverence for Rama and the stories related to him. Some of the *Alvars* have sung the Ramayana episodes.

Periyalvar who is popularly known as Vishnuchitta in Telugu literature has sung an interesting song (ten verses) in which he mentions a few personal episodes which could have been known only to Rama and Sita.³⁰ One of the episodes refers to the *kakasura* (wicked crow). Another episode is that Sita adorns her husband with a garland of jasmynes. Hanuman narrates these to Sita to convince her that he is the messenger of Rama.

Another saint, Kulasekhara, a royal poet, has also sung

²⁹ *Kamba Ramayanam—Balakanda* (Murray & Co.), introduction, p. 4.

³⁰ Mayilai Madhavadasan, (ed.), *Nalayira Diviya-p-Pirapantam* (Madras, The Manali Lakshmana Mudaliar's Specific Endowments), 1962, pp. 75-77.

certain episodes. To him, Rama and his story appear to be very dear. He has sung a beautiful lullaby in ten verses, extolling the various deeds of Rama.³¹ He has also described in ten verses the deep sorrow of Dasaratha after Rama's exile to the forests.³² Dasaratha desires to have Rama as his son in all the seven births. He says he would also leave the city for heaven just like Rama had left the city for the forests. Kulasekhara also describes some of the episodes of the Ramayana which may be regarded as a concise Ramayana.³³

Tondaradippodi Alvar alias Vipranarayana, in one of his songs, refers to an interesting episode of a squirrel that helped Rama in the construction of the *setu* (causeway).³⁴ Though this incident is not found in Valmiki's work, this has been narrated in Ranganatha Ramayanam in Telugu.

Tirumangai Alvar, another important saint-poet, has extolled the greatness of Rama, namely, his universal love. He is said to have addressed Guha as his brother and referred to Sita and Lakshmana as the sister-in-law and younger brother of Guha.³⁵ According to T. P. Meenakshisundaran, 'this message has become the very heart of Kamban's epic'.³⁶

Periavacchanpillai, a devout Vaishnava teacher who lived in about 12th century, had compiled a Ramayana entitled *Pacurappadi Ramayanam*. Though this is a small work, still it is significant for one reason namely, that the author being an adept in the *Nalayira Divvīyap Pirapantam* had woven this work using the very same phrases as found in the *Pirapantam*.

It is a fact that Kamban drew much inspiration from the songs of these *Alvars* and elaborated in his poem some of the above episodes. But it may also be said that the Kamba Ramayanam, to-day, has almost eclipsed all other works in Tamil dealing with the story of Rama.

Story of Rama in the Tevaram

It is interesting to note that the Saiva poets (Nayanmars)

³¹ *Nalayira Divvīyap-pirapantam*, pp. 172-173.

³² *Ibid*, pp. 174-176.

³³ *Ibid*, pp. 177-179.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 204.

³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 324.

³⁶ *A History of Tamil Literature*, p. 105.

also derived inspiration from the Ramayana story. We find in the Tevaram, a collection of devotional hymns sung by the Saiva poets, references to the characters of the Ramayana, namely Ravana and Rama. Tirujnanasambandar refers to the attempt of Ravana to lift the Himalayas and his defeat at the hands of Siva and other details. Tirunavukkarasar also refers to some of the deeds of Ravana.

Kamba Ramayanam (KR)

Kamban who is known as *Kavichakravarti* (Emperor among poets) is acclaimed as the greatest epic poet in Tamil. Though he has a few other works to his credit, his name and fame mainly rest on his immortal work, the Ramayana. It is, perhaps, the only Tamil poem which is known better in other languages outside the Tamil land for a long time. It is said that a Kannada inscription of the fourteenth century refers to the Kamba Ramayanam.³⁷ It is also popular in Kerala from very early times. According to a legendary story, Lord Siva was born as Kamban who wrote the Kamba Ramayanam consisting of thirty two dramas that could be enacted.³⁸ This is used for *pavakuttu* in the temples of Siva. The details regarding *pavakuttu* given by Chelvat Achyuta Menon are worth quoting here:

‘ This is a kind of shadow-play conducted by two men, who exhibit shadow-characters on the screen and speak for them. The performance is regarded as sacred by the masses who attend it in the same spirit of devotion as they visit temples. Kamba Ramayanam is generally the literature followed by the conductors, who very often deviate into learned discussions on philosophical and literary subjects in the form of a dialogue. This is often done in a competitive spirit’.³⁹

Though Kamba Ramayanam is not as popular in the Telugu region as in the Kerala and Kannada regions, a proverb based on it is current among the Telugu speakers in the Chittur district.

³⁷ *A History of Tamil Literature*, p. 103.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

³⁹ *Ezuttaccan and His Age*, p. 16.

The proverb is *Emira, Kambaramayanam mailaduchunnavu* which means, 'What! are you speaking Kamba Ramayanam?'⁴⁰

However, recently, Kamba Ramayanam has been translated into Telugu; and a few writings on Kamban's life and work are also available in Telugu.⁴¹

There is a story that Kamban visited the court of Rudra Deva I, the Kakatiya king of Warangal and recited a *venba* (verse) on him.⁴² While eulogising the king, Kamban said in that verse that plantain leaves became scarce in his country (Warangal) since the whole world had been his guests. Even though the expression is rather hyperbolic, it contains some truth. Besides praising the hospitality and greatness of Rudra Deva, Kamban indirectly complained that plantain leaves were not abundant in Warangal, which is a fact. Thus Kamban appears to be a 'master in combining truth with beauty'.⁴³

Mu. Raghava Iyengar and S. Vaiyapuri Pillai⁴⁴ are of the opinion that the above incident might have taken place, while Somasundara Desikar expressed his doubt as to its correctness.⁴⁵

Kamban appears to be the first Tamil poet to employ, in his work, a few Telugu words. For example, *tammi* (lotus),⁴⁶ *akkata* (alas)⁴⁷ are definitely Telugu forms. Further, from his description of the Godavari, he seems to have seen the river.⁴⁸ He uses the term *Kidanta Godavari* which suggests that the river is overflowing

⁴⁰ C. Ramalinga Reddi has quoted this proverb in his introduction to the Telugu rendering of the *Kamba Ramayanam* (Vol. II, p. XI) by P. Sri-ramulu Reddi. Ramalinga Reddi feels that some of the descriptions Kamban has made are rather long.

⁴¹ Adipudi Somanatha Rao (1867-1941) is said to have first translated KR in verse. But this is not published yet. (Refer N. Venkâta Rao's article, *Vijnana Sarvasvam*, Vol. IV, p. 1231). Putalapattu Sriramulu Reddi has translated KR and published the same in 2 volumes (1950 and 1953).

Ti. Su. Murugesam Pillai was the first to write in classical Telugu on the life of Kamban. This was published in the *Andhra Sahitya Parishat Patrika* (Vol. 12).

⁴² Duraisami Pillai, *Avvai cu., Tamil Navalai Charitai* (Madras, South India Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society Ltd.,) 1949, p. 79.

⁴³ C. P. Venkatarama Aiyar, *Kamban And His Art* (Madras, C. Coomaraswamy Naidu & Sons), 1913, p. 14.

⁴⁴ *Araicchi-tokuti*, p. 325; *Kamban Kaviyam*, p. 7.

⁴⁵ *Kakatiya Sanchika* (Kakatiya Number), 1935, p. 230.

⁴⁶ KR 1-13-30.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 6 (1)-2-32.

with water. He may have used the term *kidanta* which is generally used to denote the vastness of a thing. According to T. K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliar, Kamban seems to have toured the country from Kanyakumari to the Himalayas.⁴⁹

It can be seen from the above that Kamban was acquainted with the Telugu region and its language as well. As he was not patronised by the then Chola king, it is possible, he might have approached the Kakatiya ruler for some help. There is also a proverb in Tamil *Nan Kakattiyan, Pokkattiyan alla* meaning 'I am a Kakatiya, I am not helpless'.⁵⁰ This also suggests that some sort of relationship must have existed between the Kakatiyas and the Tamils.

Kamban is said to be a contemporary of Kulottunga Chola III who was also known as *Tyagavinodan*.⁵¹ The Chola king of Nellore, Tikka I, (contemporary of Kulottunga) was loyal to the Chola Imperial House and bears the title *Chola Sihapana-charya*. Tikka I appears to be a friend of the Kakatiya ruler, Ganapati. It is likely that the Cholas through the Cholas of Nellore sought the help of the Kakatiya ruler in putting down the Pandyas who appear to be their common enemy. When there were political alliances between the Cholas and the Kakatiyas, it is likely that there were social contacts also. Hence it may be said that Kamban might have visited some parts of the Telugu region and he being a great poet might have received honours from the Telugu rulers.

Kamban named his epic *Ramavataram* (the Descent of Rama). It is also called *Ramakatai* (the story of Rama) and *Kambanatakam* (Kamban's drama). But the popular name is merely *Ramayanam* or *Kamba Ramayanam*.

In one of the prefatory verses, Kamban made it clear that three poets had written the Ramayana in Sanskrit, the *tevapatai* (deva bhasha), and that he had followed Valmiki's version.⁵²

⁴⁸ KR. 3-5-1.

⁴⁹ *Kambar Tarum Ramayanam*, first part, introduction, p. II.

⁵⁰ *Kakatiya Sanchika*, p. 231.

⁵¹ *Kamban Kaviyam*, p. 14.

⁵² Vai. Mu. Gopalakrishnamachariyar (ed.) *Kamba Ramayanam* (1957), p. 24; He names the three poets as Valmiki, Vasishtha and Bodhayana. But some feel that Vasishtha can be replaced by Vyasa.

S. Vaiyapuri Pillai in his *Kamban Kaviyam* (p. 18) says that according to *Ramacharitam*, a poem in Malayalam, they are Valmiki, Vyasa and Agastya.

He had a very high regard for Valmiki. Kamban said that his desire to compose the Ramayana was like that of a cat's desire to drink the entire milk in the ocean of milk. This only shows his great virtue, namely, humility. But the truth is that Kamban's Ramayana is regarded as a great work in Tamil literature and Kamban as the greatest among Tamil poets. There are a few Tamil scholars, who even consider Kamban's work superior to that of Valmiki. According to V. V. S. Aiyar, 'in the Ramayana of Kamban, the world possesses an epic which can challenge comparison not merely with the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*, the *Paradise Lost* and the *Mahabharata*, but with its original itself, namely, the *Ramayana* of Valmiki'.⁵³

Though Kamban's chief source is the work of Valmiki, it may be said that he did not translate the poem, but only recreated the story in his own way. This is true with most of the old Ramayanas that appeared in several Indian languages. Hence we find in the various versions several deviations from the original. Such differences are found in Kamba Ramayanam also. Mu. Raghava Iyengar feels that they are not the creations of Kamban.⁵⁴ The poet may have consulted other Ramayanas available in Sanskrit and Tamil. He, therefore, feels that the Ramayana written in Tamil before Kamban should also contain certain variations from Valmiki's work. Another scholar has observed as follows: 'Excepting deviations like this, we find Kamban adhering to the main incidents and following closely some of Valmiki's stanzas'.⁵⁵

Date of Kamban

Several interesting anecdotes have gathered round the life of Kamban. However, scholars are of the opinion that he was born to one Adittan in Tiruvaluntur in Tanjore District and his patron was Chadayappan. He is said to have lived in the 9th⁵⁶ or the

⁵³ *Kamba Ramayana—A study* (Bombay, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan), 1965, p. 1.

⁵⁴ *Araicchi-t-tokuti*, pp. 20-21.

⁵⁵ E. S. Varadarajanar, 'The influence of the Ramayana on Tamil Literature,' *Indian Writers at Chidambaram* (Bombay, P.E.N. Publication), 1957, p. 122.

⁵⁶ V. V. S. Aiyar, T. K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliar and others support this date. It may also be mentioned that this date has been given in the postal stamp (Kamban stamp) issued by the Government of India in 1964.

10th century A.D.⁵⁷ The other view is that Kamban belonged to the time of Kulottunga Chola III, who had the title of *Tyagarinodan*, that is, during the latter half of the 12th century and the beginning of the 13th century.⁵⁸

It is generally believed that Kamban was not patronised by the Chola king, though he was a great poet. It is also said that he had to face the wrath of the king and so it is probable that he might have visited other kingdoms including Warangal. It is further stated that Kamban was killed by a certain king.⁵⁹ Taking all these stories and legends into consideration, it may perhaps be said that the relationship between the poet and the Chola king was not smooth for some unknown reason and that he was patronised by people. It appears that during his own life-time, his Ramayana became popular. As a result, some additions and alterations may have been made in it. Chidambaranatha Mudaliar calls it a poem of interpolations.⁶⁰ He has included in his edition of KR only 167 verses out of the 1,420 verses in *Balakandam* and 550 out of the 1,210 verses in *Ayodhyakandam*. According to him, the rest are later additions. It is reliably learnt that one Velliambalavana-t-Tampiran has included in KR some verses.⁶¹ KR in its present form contains 10,569 stanzas or 42,276 lines.

Kamban has composed the first six kandas. The seventh kanda, *Uttarakanda*, has been written by one Vanitatan. But there is a view that it was composed by the famous Ottakkuttar who is also known as *Kavichakravarti*.⁶²

After Kamban

Writing on Kamban's epic, Mu. Raghava Iyengar states that after KR came to light, the Ramayanas written before him have been lost sight of.⁶³ The position has not changed in the post-Kamban period also.

Arunachala Kavi of the eighteenth century has ably dramatised the Ramayana in the form of *kirtanai* (song) and his work is

⁵⁷ *A History of Tamil Literature*, p. 102.

⁵⁸ S. Vaiyapuri Pillai and others support this view. Refer his *Tamil-c-cudarmānikal*, pp. 109-132 and also *Kaviya Kalam*, pp. 222-226.

⁵⁹ *Kamban Kaviyam*, p. 136.

⁶⁰ *Kambar Tarum Ramayanam*, introduction, p. XI.

⁶¹ *Kamba Ramayanam, Bala Kandam* (Murray & Co.), introduction, p. 8.

⁶² *Ibid*, pp. 11-12.

⁶³ *Araicchit-tokuti*, p. 20.

called *Ramanataka-k-kirtanai*. This is a popular work since it is at once literary and musical. Saint-poet Ramalingar (19th century) has sung in his *Tiru Arutpa* about the greatness of Rama's name under the title *Sriramanamat Tiruppatikam* which consists of ten verses of four lines each.

Among the modern authors, Kottaiyur Subramanya Iyer has written a Ramayana in six kandas in 9,379 verses of four lines each. This is entitled *Ramayana Venba* (published in 1930). Madhurakavi Srinivasa Iyengar is also said to have written a *Ramayana Venba*; but this has not yet seen the light. In the post Kamban period, several minor works based on the Ramayana have been written and among them the following may be mentioned: *Ramodantam* by Cu. Kumarasami Pulavar, *Ramasamiyam* by Ramaswami Iyer, *Ramayanat Tiruppukal* by Rangasami Reddiar, *Akalikai Venba* by Vellakkal Subramanya Mudaliar, *Ilankaip Parani* by Kanakaraja Iyer, *Ramayanak Kirtanai* by Vembu Ammal, *Iramayanam* by Muthusami Kavirayar and *Sampurna Ramanatakam* by Sivashanmugam Pillai.

Several abridged or full translations of Valmiki's Ramayana and Kamban's poem have appeared in prose. Pandit Natesa Sastri, C. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, Tatadesika Tatachariyar and a host of others have rendered VR in prose, while the prose versions of KR have been brought out by Tirucchitrumbala Desikar, N. C. Ramaswamy and others. V. S. Venkataraghavachariyar has translated in prose Kalidasa's *Raghuvamsa*.

The story of the *Uttarakanda* also has attracted the Tamil scholars. Tirucchitrumbala Desikar, Ananta Kavirayar and a few others have written the *Uttarakanda* in prose.

Adhyatma Ramayana and *Ananda Ramayana* also have been rendered into Tamil. In this connection, Virai Alavandar's poem *Jnana Vasishtha Amala Ramayanam* in 2055 verses deserves special mention.

To sum up: the earliest Tamil version of the Ramayana appeared in the Sangam age itself and that the story of Rama became so popular that it is preserved in similes and proverbs. The Alvars and Kamban not only popularised the story of the Ramayana but also gave it a permanent place in Tamil literature. The story has also attracted the modern poets and writers. Thus it can be seen from the above that the influence of the Ramayana on Tamil literature has been very old and continuous.

Chapter III

The Ramayana in Telugu

Rama and the Telugu people

There is a proverb in Telugu which says: *Vinte Bharatam vinali, tinte garelu tinali*. If you want to hear, hear the Mahabharata; if you want to eat, eat *garelu* (round pan-cakes made of black gram).

The Mahabharatam commenced by Nannaya in about 1030 A.D. is the first known literary work in Telugu.¹ Nannaya could complete only the first three cantos and the work was later completed by Tikkana² and Errana.³ These three poets form the famous *Kavitraya*, the poet-trio and this great work is at once an authority for usage, a piece of good poetry and a book of knowledge in Telugu. Even to this day, the Telugu Mahabharatam continues its hold on the minds of the writers as a book of authority. The late Tirupati Venkata Kavulu have rightly observed that it is a *Veda* to the Telugu writers.⁴

¹ *Telugu culture* (Madras, Telugu Bhasha Samiti), 1959, p. 64.

² Tikkana, who lived in the latter half of the 13th century, completed fifteen cantos.

³ Errana is also known as Errapragada. He lived in the latter half of the 14th century.

Though it is generally said that Nannaya completed the first three cantos, he actually finished two cantos (*adi* and *sabha parvas*) and a part of the third namely, *aranya-parva*. Errana completed the remaining portion of the *aranya-parva* in the name of Nannaya who left it unfinished.

⁴ *Devibhagavatam*, (Kadiyam, C. Venkata Sastri & Sons), 2nd edn., 1953, p. 5.

These twin poets (Divakarla Tirupati Sastri and Chellapilla Venkata Sastri) were well-known *Saivadhani*s and several of the modern Telugu poets are their disciples.

Despite these facts, it may be mentioned that the story of Rama has not only attracted but also captured the hearts of the Telugu people and poets as well. It is no exaggeration to say that there is not a village worth its name in Andhra which does not have a Rama *mandir* (temple). Kasinathuni Nageswara Rao, one of the architects of modern Andhra, has observed that Rama is the favourite deity of the Andhras.⁵ Tyagaraja (1767-1847) the immortal composer, whose name is a house-hold word in the world of Karnatic music, who sang the glory of Rama in several *Kirtanas* (songs) said, 'Rama, who is there equal to you?' Kankanti Paparaju, an outstanding poet of the 17th century said as follows: 'A scholar who is endowed with the power of distinguishing the good from the bad and has the gift of writing poetry should not attempt unholy stories discarding the holy tales of Rama. If he did so, then, what is the use of his wisdom? What is the use of his fascinating poetry?'⁶

Another poet by name, Chekuri Siddaya, in his *Sri Rama Karnamritam* extolled the greatness of the Ramayana in the following words: Ramayana, the first poem, composed by Valmiki, dear to Parvati, contains the *Vedanta* meaning; equal to the *Mandara*, the *Kalpa* tree, it gives *moksha* (beatitude). If heard, even great sins will perish; if read, one will reach the place of Vishnu, Vaikuntha.

Besides celebrating every year the birthday of Rama, Sriramanavami, the custom of invoking His blessings every day while, giving bath to the children is prevalent in several Telugu homes. The female member of the family, usually the mother, towards the end of the bath, utters the saying: 'let Sri Rama protect you; be blessed with hundred years of life.' The bath is said to be complete only after this is uttered. Another custom that is in vogue is to sing the song beginning with *Anandamaye anandamaye* during marriage while the *mangala sutra* (tali) is being tied. This song contains a reference to the marriage of Sita to Rama. This is usually played on the *nagaswaram* and it is interesting to note that this is sung even in the marriages of the Tamils.

⁵ *Andhra Vangmaya Charitra* (Madras, Andhra Grantha mala) 1947, p. 32.

⁶ *Uttara Ramayanamu* (Madras, Rayalu & Co.), 1949, p. 3.

⁷ 'Srirama raksha, nurellu ayussu.'

Story of Rama in proverbs

There are also a good number of proverbs and sayings in Telugu based on the story of the Ramayana.⁸ Some are given below:

1. **Intiguttu Lankaku chetu**

(Telling one's secrets has brought the downfall of Lanka).

This criticises the act of Vibhishana, the brother of Ravana, who disclosed to Rama the secrets pertaining to Ravana and his kingdom which finally brought the downfall of Lanka.

2. **Sita putte, Lanka chede**

(Sita was born, Lanka was destroyed)

This suggests the story (not found in Valmiki) that Sita was born in Lanka in a lotus pond and her birth was predicted as an omen for the destruction of Lanka.

3. **Sita puttuka Lanka chetuke**

(Sita's birth was for the destruction of Lanka)

The fight between Rama and Ravana which brought the downfall of Lanka was due to the abduction of Sita by Ravana.

4. **Katte, Kotte, Tecche**

(Constructed, killed and brought)

These three words give the Ramayana in a nutshell. *Katte* refers to the construction of the bridge (*setu*) on the sea; *kotte* means killing of Ravana; *tecche* refers to the bringing of Sita from Lanka.

5. **Ramayanamanta vini, Ramuniki Sita emi kavalani adigadata**

(After hearing the entire story of the Ramayana, someone asked, 'What was Sita to Rama?')

⁸ Captain M. W. Carr in his publication *Telugu Samitalu* (Madras, V. Ramaswamy Sastrulu & Sons), 1955, has recorded about ten proverbs based on the Ramayana story. *Telugu Sametalu* (Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh Sahitya Akademi), 1965, also has given fairly a good number of proverbs relating to the Ramayana story (pp. 358-406).

This is an interesting proverb. One need not hear the complete story to answer this question. This, perhaps, refers to the different versions of the Ramayana story, Sita being mentioned as the wife of Rama in one version and as sister in another. This proverb suggests the presence of the different versions of the story of Rama in the Telugu country.

6. **Ramunivanti raju, Ravanunivanti vairi leru**

(There is no king like Rama and no enemy like Ravana)

This confirms the Indian tradition that Rama was an ideal king. This, perhaps, condemns Ravana who fought even with the God-incarnate.

7. **Ramunipadalu tagilite rallu ramanulautavi**

(Even stones will turn into sweet maids if the feet of Rama touch them.)

This definitely refers to the episode of Ahalya.

8. **Ramabanam**

(The arrow of Rama)

A very powerful shaft.

9. **Sri (Si) Ramu sena**

(The army of Sri Rama)

This refers to the monkeys who helped Rama.

This has been used by Peddana, a celebrated poet of the 16th century in his work *Manu Charitra* (4-16)

10. **Uduta bhakti**

(The devotion of a squirrel)

There is a story in some of the Telugu works on Rama to the effect that a squirrel also helped him, in its own humble way, in the construction of the bridge across the sea.

This is often used by the Telugus whenever they want to express their admiration for the sincerity of action, however trivial it might be.

The presence of innumerable Rama *mandirs* and of several

works available, perhaps, in hundreds,⁹ glorifying the story of Rama, bear ample testimony to the popularity of Rama in the Telugu country and the Ramayana literature. The story, either complete or in parts, has been represented in every literary form—*kavya* (poetical composition), *dwipada*, *yakshagana* (dance play), *salaka* (a century of verses), *dandaka*, *geya* (song), *samkirtana*, *chatu* (stray verse), drama, prose etc. In other words, the story of Rama has been narrated from the most dignified literary form, namely, *kavya* to the ordinary folk-song sung by the unlettered. This only shows that the Telugu mind is a stronghold of Rama cult and that the influence of the Ramayana on Telugu literature is powerful, old and continuous. An attempt is made here to trace briefly the development of Ramayana literature in Telugu.

For the sake of convenience, the Ramayanas in Telugu may be divided into three categories —*Purva Ramayanas* (upto the coronation of Rama), *Uttara Ramayanas* (the later history) and *Adhyatma Ramayanas*.

Ranganatha Ramayanam (RR)

Among the available works, Ranganatha Ramayanam composed in the *dwipada* metre may be considered as the earliest and complete Ramayana in Telugu.¹⁰ Some believe that it was written in about 1240.¹¹ According to some scholars, the RR might have been composed during 1280-1300¹² or towards the end of the 14th century.¹³ It contains 17,290 *dwipadas* or 34,580 lines.

⁹ Katta Varadaraju, *Sri Ramayanamu*, Vol. I (Tanjore, Saraswati Mahal Series), 1950; N. Venkata Rao's introduction, p. XIV.

From the Classified catalogues of Books kept in the Office of the Registrar of Books, published by the Madras Record Office, it is obvious that several books relating to the Ramayana have been published in Telugu during 1867 to 1920.

¹⁰ RR has been published by (1) Vavilla Ramaswami Sastrulu & Sons, Madras with prefaces by Nagapudi Kuppuswamayya and Janamanchi Seshadri Sarma (1941), (2) Andhra University, Waltair, with an introduction by Pingali Lakshmikantham (1942) and (3) Rayalu & Co., Kadapa, with a preface by Mallampalli Somasekhara Sarma (1958).

¹¹ Pingali Lakshmikantham, *Gautama Vyasamulu* (Visakhapatnam, M. S. R. Murti & Co.), 1961, p. 127.

¹² Veturi Prabhakara Sastri, *Simhavalokanam*, Muktyala, Manimanjari, 2nd edn., 1955, p. 18.

¹³ M. Somasekhara Sarma's preface to *Ranganatha Ramayanam*, (Kadapa, Rayalu & Co.), 1958, p. 13.

The authorship of this work is also open to doubt. According to the traditional belief, it was written by a poet called Ranganatha and hence the work came to be known as RR. Some of the authors on poetics like Appakavi (17th century) had quoted in their works some stanzas from this Ramayana and according to them it was only RR. Further, a few poets like Anantamatya¹⁴ in their salutation to the old poets (*kavistuti*) mentioned the name of Ranganatha along with the poets Nannaya, Tikkana, Errana, Bhaskara and others. It is obvious from this that there was a poet by name Ranganatha. Veturi Prabhakara Sastri who ably edited the RR for the Andhra University had suggested that Chakrapani Ranganatha, a contemporary of Palkuriki Somanatha of the 12th or the 13th century, might be the same Ranganatha who assisted Gona Buddha Reddi in his work.¹⁵ According to him, several references to Vaishnavism are found in the RR and that they cannot be regarded as mere interpolations since they are found in almost the same manner in various manuscripts. It is also believed that Chakrapani Ranganatha was a Vaishnavite in the beginning, though he became a Saivite later.

The other theory is that RR was written by a royal poet called Gona or Konda Buddha Reddi at the instance of his father Panduranga Vitthalanatha and that he named it after his father, the abbreviated form of whose name being Ranganatha;¹⁶ so named Ranganatha Ramayanam, though written by Gona Buddha Reddi. In the preface of this work, the author has been mentioned as merely Gona Buddha and king Vitthala as his father.¹⁷ Ranganatha's name is not at all found. Further, there is no internal evidence to prove that the members of the Gona clan belong to the Reddi community; but it is ascertained from inscriptions that they are Reddis.

Whether Gona Buddha was the real author or not, he must have been a great scholar, an authority on the Ramayana as well as a great patron of poets. He has been mentioned as *Kavikalpataru* (*Kalpa* tree for the poets) and *Kaviloka Bhoja* (the well-known Bhoja of the classical age who patronised several Sanskrit poets).

¹⁴ *Bhojarajiyam*, 1904, p. 1-9.

¹⁵ *Simhavalokanam* p. 19.

¹⁶ *Gautama Vyasamulu*, p. 122.

¹⁷ RR (Rayalu & Co.), p. 4.

So it is needless to say that he was the right person to write the story of Rama since he was a scholar who knew the intricacies of the Ramayana and a great scholar in the language.¹⁸

There has been a lot of discussion on the subject and much has been said on both sides.¹⁹

Summarising the above, it may perhaps be said that Gona Buddha Reddi might have written a Ramayana, as he was an adept in it, after the name of his father and that a poet by name Ranganatha might have assisted him to a considerable extent. Or perhaps, it was written jointly by them. Even though there is no evidence to prove this, legendary tales and the observations of the rhetoricians relating to Ranganatha should not be brushed aside on the ground that they are not authentic or not accurate. The legendary tales ascribe the authorship to Ranganatha and support the contemporaneity of Ranganatha and Gona Buddha. Whatever the authorship may be, RR is a popular work and that it is unique in itself for the following reasons.

First, it is written in the *dwipada* metre which can be set to music and it is the first and complete Ramayana composed in

¹⁸ RR, p. 4.

¹⁹ Veturi Prabhakara Sastri, Janamanchi Seshadri Sarma and others supported the view that Ranganatha was the author of RR while the late Cattamanchi Ramalinga Reddi, Pingali Lakshmikantam and others attributed the authorship to Gona Buddha Reddi.

C. P. Brown who got a new manuscript copy of RR prepared in 1839 after consulting 15 other manuscripts, has observed as follows: 'Some of the learned are of opinion that Ranganatha is in truth the name of the author, who as usual, attributes the work to his patron..... This translation of the Ramayanam is always attributed to a poet named Ranganatha; but his name is nowhere mentioned in the book; while it is asserted in each volume that the author was Buddha Razu who wrote it at the desire of his father Vitthal Razu.'

(Ms. Nos. D. 981 & 1003 available in the Govt. Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras).

In his *Telugu — English Dictionary* (Madras, The Christian Knowledge Society's Press), 1852, Brown has stated (introduction, p. XII): 'This is usually called the Ranganatha-Ramayan. But all the manuscripts state that it was written by Kona Buddha Raz, son of Kona Vitthal Bhupati. This is perhaps the patron's name. No manuscript names Ranga Natha as the author. It is believed that Ranga Natha was really the author; and that the other personage was the patron. This version appears to be one of the oldest Telugu poems.'

that metre. Some portions from it are sung during puppetry (*tolubommatalata*). Thus, it is popular with the masses also. Second, it is composed in such a uniform and simple but dignified style that could be understood and appreciated by the average reader. Lastly, one can find in it several episodes or details which are not found in the VR as available in its present form but prevalent in the Telugu folk-lôre. Though the author clearly mentioned that he would narrate the story as told by Valmiki, one can find in his work several deviations from the original. But we do not know the text he has followed. Since some of the stories described in the RR are not found in other language versions and since they are found in the Telugu folk songs also, it is presumed that those stories were current in the then Telugu country. Thus RR has made a bold attempt of assimilating the stories dear to the people at the same time being faithful to the original. In short, it may be called a work representing the classical (*purana*) and indigenous (*desi*) styles.

Bhaskara Ramayanam (BR)

The next work that is worth mentioning is Bhaskara Ramayanam.²⁰ Though some scholars are of the view that this is the first Ramayana that appeared in Telugu, it may be said that BR and RR appear to be contemporary works. BR is the first Ramayana written in the *kavya* style. It is a long poem of six cantos interspersed with prose passages. It consists of 6,081 poems and prose passages.

As is evident from the name, this work is called after Bhaskara, one of the four authors. Bhaskara who is believed to have lived in the 13th century is definitely a master poet among them. He wrote only *Aranya Kanda* and a portion of the *Yuddha Kanda*. The other *kandas* were completed by his son Mallikarjuna Bhattu, his disciple Kumararudra deva and his friend Ayyalarya. That is why the style is not uniform throughout. The critical consensus today is that the poetry of Bhaskara is sublime and dignified and that BR, on the whole, is a beautiful poem. It is held in high esteem by the scholars.

²⁰ BR. was first edited and published by Karalapati Rangayya. It was later edited by K. Anantacharyulu and published in 1897. It was again printed in 1939 with an introduction by Tam. Te. (Tanjanaagaram Tevapperumallayya) and in 1961 with a preface by Medepalli Venkataramanacharyulu.

In the case of this work also, there has been a lot of discussion over the date and exact name of Bhaskara. Some identified him as the famous *mantri* (minister) Bhaskara, the grand father of Tikkana, who lived in the 13th century. According to one school of thought, he is *Hulakki* or *Halakki* (*tambula*, a Kannada word) Bhaskara who lived in the 13th century. Hulakki Bhaskara was perhaps the court poet of the Kakatiya king Prataparudra deva II who reigned from 1296 to 1323.²¹ Further, there are some references in the BR to one Sahini Marana who is believed to have lived in the 13th century. On the basis of the available data, it is probable that the author of BR may be the same Hulakki Bhaskara, a great poet in his own right.²²

Errana Ramayanam

There was another Ramayanam also in the 14th century. This is by Errapregada better known as Errana, one of the poet-trio. Perhaps, he was not satisfied with RR and BR, as they are not exact renderings of Valmiki. According to Potana, the author of the Telugu *Mahabhagavatam*, BR may be regarded as a condensed version of the Ramayana. He said that Bhaskara had dealt with it rather loosely; otherwise he (Potana) would have made the work voluminous.²³ In this connection, let me quote below the remarks made by one of the modern scholars.²⁴

‘The authors of Bhaskara Ramayanam no doubt laid the Telugu world under deep obligations, but their translation was after all an abridgement. Ranganatha’s translation was not a literal translation either. They have both survived the period when they were considered adequate.’

Perhaps, Errana too might have thought on the same lines. Otherwise, there was no justification in his attempting the

²¹ Arudra, *Samagra Andhra Sahityam*, 3rd Vol. (Madras, M. Seshachalam & Co.,) 1965, p. 22.

²² Sishta Ramakrishna Sastri in his *Andhra Vangmaya Charitra Sarvasvam* (p. 607) has discussed this at great length and attributes the authorship of BR to Hulakki Bhaskara.

²³ *Srimat Andhra Valmiki Ramayanam*, preface p. 7.

²⁴ J. Ramayya Pantulu in his letter dated 29th September 1908 addressed to Vavilikolanu Subba Row (*Srimat Andhra Valmiki Ramayanam*).

Ramayana story again, though he was a staunch devotee of Siva and was known as *Sambhudasa*. It is, therefore, possible that Errana may have written a Ramayana with the sole object of doing full justice to the original. But, unfortunately this is believed to be lost though it was available till the time of Kuchimanchi Timma Kavi (about 1756), a poet-grammarian, who had quoted in his *Sarvalakshanasara Sangrahamu* nine stanzas from Errana Ramayanam. Veturi Prabhakara Sastri was able to trace a few more stanzas, mostly from the *Tuddhakanda*, and published them.²⁵ But the authorship of some of these verses is doubted.²⁶

It is really unfortunate that this Ramayana has been lost and the Telugu literary world is thus deprived of a great work written by a great poet. The patron of the poet, Prolaya Vema Reddi, himself declared that he got name and fame by causing the poet Errana to write *Ramakatha* (the story of Rama).²⁷ Later poets like Jakkana (14th century)²⁸ and Chedaluvada Mallana (16th century) had referred to this Ramayana in their works. Mallana, in fact, made it clear that Errana wrote his Ramayana basing his story on that of Valmiki.²⁹

It is interesting to note that Errana who completed the *Aranyaperva* (Vanaparva) in the Mahabharatam in the name of Nannaya, had written the story of Rama there also.

Koravi Satyanarana alias Pina Bhimana (14th century) who was known as the 'grandsire of Telugu poetry' (*Andhra Kavita-pitamaha*) is also said to have written a Ramayana in verse; but it is lost.³⁰ It appears that some more Ramayanas are lost, the reasons being unknown, and among them *Viddikuchi Ramayanam*, *Sakalavarnanapurna Ramayanam* by Chitrakavi Anantakavi may be mentioned.

²⁵ 'Errapreggada Ramayanam', *Reddi Samchika* (Number), 1947, pp. 399-413.

²⁶ Nori Narasimha Sastri, 'Errapregada', *Telugu Vijnana Sarvasvamu*, Vol. 4 (Madras, Telugu Bhasha Samiti), 1961, p. 736.

²⁷ *Harivansam*, 1-39; Perhaps, *Ramakatha* was the title for Errana's Ramayanam.

²⁸ *Vikramarka Charitram*, 1-14.

²⁹ *Vipranarayana Charitra*, 1-13.

³⁰ Koravi Goparaju, *Simhasanadwairimsika*, 1-49.

The poet, in his *kavistuti* had referred to the poets Ranganatha and Hulakki Bhaskara (1-12).

Annamacharya Ramayanam

Tallapaka Annamacharya (1424-1503), the famous *vaggeyakara* (composer of songs) and a devotee of Lord Venkateswara of Tirupati, had also written a Ramayana in the *dwipada* metre. Though this is not available, it is said that a portion of it is preserved in the Saraswati Mahal Library, Tanjore, in a manuscript (No. 3335) entitled *Ramakatha*.³¹ This is also in the *dwipada* metre. But, unfortunately, the names of the poet and his patron are not mentioned in it. Moreover, it does not deal with the entire story, though called *Ramakatha*. It only gives the story of a dove which was protected by the king Sibi with whom the bird took refuge and this story occurs in the dialogue that took place between Rama and Sugriva.³² Though there is no evidence to show that this belongs to the Ramayana written by Annamacharya, it may be said that it might have been taken from some Ramayana, the authorship of which is not known.

Annamacharya, in one of his songs, has given the Ramayana story in a nutshell, as narrated below:³³

‘He is the *parabrahma* (Supreme God)
 The story of Rama, extolled in hundred crores, is the
 essence of all *punyas*
 Rama, born on earth, married the maid born of earth
 Gave protection to all the dwellers of the forest
 Disfigured that woman of evil intent
 And put an end to Khara and Dushana.
 He killed Vali and gave Sugriva the Kishkindha
 Built a bridge and crossed it along with the monkeys
 Killed Ravana, Kumbhakarna and others
 And returned to Ayodhya with his wife.
 Accompanied by the brothers
 He ruled the earth
 And had sons—Kusa and Lava
 He who crowned Vibhishana as king of Lanka
 Stays there on the Venkata hill.’

³¹ Katta Varadaraju *Ramayanam*, Nidudavolu Venkata Rao's introduction, p. XVI.

³² Veturi Ananda Murti, 'Alabhyamagu Annamacharya Ramayanamu', *Bharati*, April, 1963, pp. 69-73.

³³ *Adhyatma Samkirtanalu*, Vol. IX, 1952, song 210.

Since Annamacharya was a great musician, it is felt that his work must be pleasing to the ear and that he might have followed Valmiki.

Katta Varadaraju Ramayanam (KVR)

Among the other Ramayanas written in the *dwipada* metre, those of Katta Varadaraju (about 1650) and Bhosala Ekoji (about 1735) deserve special mention.

The work of Katta Varadaraju, a royal poet, entitled *Sri Ramayanam* has been recently published. It consists of six *kandas* and 23,170 *dwipadas*, i.e. 46,340 lines. Thus KVR becomes the biggest *dwipada* work. It is also the first exact translation of the original. Still, one can find a few deviations from the original. Nidudavolu Venkata Rao, who has edited this work with the available single manuscript, has pointed out that some of the passages of this Ramayana are also found in RR.³⁴ He also feels that RR contains some *dwipadas* from the Ramayanam of Annamacharya.³⁵ This only shows that all these Ramayanas, written in the *dwipada* metre, were popular and that some devotees of the Ramayana, out of their reverence for the story, may have prepared their own versions with the choicest passages from the available versions.

The Ramayanam of Bhosala Ekoji, a Maharashtrian by birth, has not yet been published. One Cheda Raghava Reddi also has written a Ramayana in the *dwipada* metre. It is lying as a manuscript.

Other Ramayanas

Besides the above complete Ramayanas, there are also a few abridged versions available in Telugu. Among them, *Ramabhyudayam* written by Ayyalaraju Ramabhadhrudu (1510-1580) stands foremost. He was one of the famous *ashtadiggajas* (eight great poets) who flourished in the court of Sri Krishnadevaraya. His work, in eight cantos, is regarded as a piece of good literature. His skill in abridging the story to suit the requisites of a *prabandha* is praiseworthy.

³⁴ This has been published in 4 volumes (Vol. I in 1950, Vols. II and III in 1952 and Vol. IV in 1953).

³⁵ KVR, Vol. I, Introduction, p. XV.

Molla, a poetess belonging to the potter community and who is said to have lived in the middle of the 14th century, has written a Ramayana in six *kandas*.³⁶ She was aware of the existing Ramayanas already written by the master poets. She was equally aware of her limitations too. Further, she was not a great scholar. Still she attempted the story of Rama in the firm belief that chanting His name would bring salvation. Despite a few errors of omission and commission, Molla Ramayanam is one of the widely read books in Telugu on account of its simple, clear and fascinating style.

Kuchimanchi Timma Kavi (1684-1757), a prolific writer, had written a Ramayana in *atcha Telugu* (pure Telugu) devoid of Sanskrit words and compounds. With a limited vocabulary, that he was able to produce a good poem is really praiseworthy.

Raghunatha Nayak of Tanjore, Anantaraju Jannaya, Mikkili Mallikarjunudu and a host of others had written Ramayanas. Besides these, there are also *Satakantha Ramayanas*, *Adbhuta Ramayanas* and *Vichitra Ramayanas* available in Telugu. In *Satakantha Ramayana*, Sita is said to have killed Satakantha, a great warrior and a brother of Ravana.³⁷

Poets like Pingali Surana went a step further by composing in one and the same work the two stories of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Such a work is called *dyarthikavya*, which means a literary composition giving two meanings. Pingali Surana was the first poet to write such a work in Telugu and its name is *Raghava Pandaviyam*. Happily it is also the best work. The other *dyarthikavyas* which describe the story of Rama are (1) *Sivarama-bhyudaya* by Poduri Pedaramamatya (2) *Dharatmaja Parinayam* by Krottalanka Mrityunjayudu (3) *Sri Ramakrishnopakhyanam* by Sripada Venkatachalam (pub. 1876) and (4) *Achalatmaja Parinayam* by Tirumala Bukkapatnam Venkatacharya (pub. 1936).

As years elapsed, there arose *thryarthi* (three meanings) and *chaturarhi* (four meanings) poems also. Of these, *Raghava Padava*

³⁶ There are different theories about her date. Some believe that she might have lived in the 15th century.

³⁷ *Satakantha Ramayanamu* (Madras, Vavilla Ramaswamy Sastrulu & Sons) 1954, 4-157.

This work is also known as *Sita Vijayam*, *Satenukha Ramayanam* and *Satakanthara Ramayanam*. Mardaya is said to have written this poem which contains four cantos.

Pandaviyam by Nelluri Viraraghava Kavi and *Yadava Raghava Pandaviyam* by Yelakuchi Balasaraswati deserve mention. Though it is generally said of these works that they were merely acrobatic feats of the poets, still it may be pointed out that these works require a mastery over Sanskrit and Telugu.

During the time of the Nayak kings of Tanjore and Madhura, prose received its due recognition and patronage and as a result of this, several prose writings came to light. Tupakula Anantabhupala, Syamaraya Kavi, Singaraju Dattatreya and a few others had written the Ramayana story in prose.

As we have seen, there are several Ramayanas in Telugu from the 13th century onwards. Almost all the authors followed Valmiki; but it should be noted that none of them except Katta Varadaraju made a sincere attempt to translate the original verbatim. In fact, it was not the aim of the old Telugu poets to translate the Sanskrit epics including the Ramayana as they are. Even the Mahabharatam of the poet-trio is not a true copy in translation of the original; it is not a word for word or *sloka* for *sloka* translation. At some places, the original was closely followed, while at some others additions were made. It is only in modern times, some scholars tried to bring out faithful translations of the Sanskrit originals.

Faithful renderings of VR

Gopinatham Venkata Kavi (1820-1890) closely followed the VR and translated it into chaste verse. His rendering in six *kandas* was published in 1887. This is also a popular Ramayana. Another work entitled *Yathaslokatatparya Ramayanam* by Kanadam Peddana Somayaji and others³⁵ came to light in 1895. Peddana Somayaji had also translated the *Adhyatma Ramayana*. Later, Vavilikolanu Subba Row (1863-1939), Janamanchi Seshadri Sarma (1882-1950), Sripada Krishnamurti Sastri (1866-1960) and a few others have published their exact renderings. The

³⁵ Balakanda — Peddana Somayaji.

Ayodhya Kanda — Kottapalli Ramacharyulu.

Aranya Kanda — Gargeyapurapu Subba Sastri.

Kiskindha Kanda — Kamasamudram Appalacharyulu.

Sundara Kanda — Tirumala Krishnacharyulu.

Yuddha Kanda — Boravelli Sesha Kavi.

translation of Vavilikolanu Subba Row entitled *Srimat Andhra Valmiki Ramayanam*, published in 1909 in two volumes has been acclaimed as a good rendering. It was printed four times even in his life time and he was called *Andhra Valmiki*.³⁹ He had also written and published a valuable commentary to it called *Mandharam*.

Satakas

It will not be out of place here to mention some of the *satakas* (century of verses) extolling the greatness of Rama. One of the requisites of a *sataka* is to have a *makuta* (refrain) which will be repeated in every stanza in its last line. There are a good number of *satakas* in Telugu with the *makuta* addressed to Rama in different names like Sitapati, Dasarathi, Prasanna Raghava, Ramaprabhu etc.⁴⁰ Most of these *satakas* describe either the various aspects of the Ramayana story or the noble qualities of Rama. In some *satakas* like *Prasanna Raghava Satakam* by Vanguru Muddu Narasa Kavi, the story of Rama has been narrated briefly. This work contains two hundred verses. In one of them, the birth of Sita has been narrated. She is said to have taken birth in Lanka. Ravana kept her in a box and put it in the sea. *Bhudevi* (the mother Earth) noticed the box and kept it with herself for a few days. Finally, Sita was traced by the king Janaka in the furrow of the plough.

Dasarathi Satakam of Bhadrachalam Ramadas (Kancharla Gopanna) is a soul-filling work. He was a great devotee of Rama and his devotion can be found in every word of the work. The refrain of this *satakam* is *Dasarathi Karunapayonidhi*, meaning 'O! Son of Dasaratha, the ocean of compassion.' This and other *satakas* are so popular that they are recited even to this day with great reverence.

In this connection, mention may be made of the songs of Tyagaraja, another great devotee of Rama.⁴¹ The varied qualities of Rama and the different episodes of the Ramayana story have been described in his exquisitely beautiful songs. Tyagaraja,

³⁹ Nidudavolu Venkata Rao, 'V. Subba Row', *Telugu Vijnana Sarvasvamu*, Vol. 4, 1961, p. 1208.

⁴⁰ *Sataka Sampulamulu*, Vols. I and II (Madras, Vavilla), 1926.

⁴¹ Tyagaraja is said to have composed 24,000 songs (*kritis*); but about a thousand are available now.

more than any other Telugu poet, had done yeoman service in spreading the Rama cult not only among the Telugus but also in the different parts of South India. In the words of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, 'he brings Rama before our eyes as he steps forward with his waving hair to bend the bow of Siva or when he aims an arrow at Marica to subdue his pride.... Tyagaraja, speaks of Rama as an integrated person.'⁴²

Of the several *Takshaganas* (operas) dealing with the Ramayana story, *Sugriva Vijayam* written by Kandukuri Rudra Kavi of the 16th century is an inspiring work. Though the validity of Rama's killing Vali has been questioned by some poets, Rudra Kavi supports the stand taken by Rama. But the remarks of Tara appear to be more shrewd and powerful than the arrows of Rama. She asks: O! Rama, why should you kill Vali unnecessarily when the abductor of your wife was alive? Where has gone this adventurous spirit when Bharata took your kingdom? Why should you break the law? Has your wisdom and statesmanship also been abducted along with Janaki?⁴³

Interestingly enough, some modern writers of our own times have also been greatly inspired by the story of Rama. Several interesting and critical articles dealing with the various aspects of the Ramayana are being published in journals. Apart from these writings, a good number of minor poems (*Khanda Kavyas*) describing the various episodes or characters are also available. Such well-known poets as Sripada Krishnamurti Sastri, Viswanatha Satyanarayana (*Srimadramayana Kalpavriksham*), Manikonda Satyanarayana Sastri (*Manikonda Ramayanam*), Challa Lakshminarayana Sastri (*Mythili*) and a few others have written the complete Ramayana in verse while Sripada Subrahmanya Sastri, Srinivasa Siromani and a host of others have translated the VR into the spoken idiom. Dodla Venkata Rama Reddi has published his Ramayana (*Dodda Ramayanam*) in two volumes in classical prose (pub. in 1955).

It may also be mentioned that the Telugu poets have translated Ramayanas from other Indian languages like Tamil, Hindi and Oriya. Thus, one can find in Telugu the Ramayana literature rich and varied.

⁴² Foreword to *The Spiritual Heritage of Tyagaraja* (Madras, The Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home), 1957, pp. 3 and 4.

⁴³ *Sugriva Vijayam* (Kakinada, Zamindar of Kapileswarapuram), p. 35.

Uttara Ramayana

The *Uttara Ramayana* or the *Uttara kanda* deals with the later history of Rama. That is to say, the story from his coronation to *nirvana* (death) is dealt with in detail in the *Uttara kanda*.

Tikkana, one of the poet-trio (about 1260) and one of the greatest poets that the language has produced was the first Telugu poet to write the *Uttara Ramayana*. His work entitled *Nirva-
chanottara Ramayanam* is written in ten cantos containing 1,260 verses while the original is a work of about 4,000 *slokas*. Tikkana comes from a great family of scholars and ministers. His grandfather was *mantri* Bhaskara whose name, as already mentioned, is associated with the authorship of BR. If this is true, there is every justification in Tikkana's writing the *Uttara Ramayana* so that he could complete the work left over by his grandfather. Tikkana, in the prefatory verses, referred to several things but did not mention any reason why he should write the *Uttara kanda* only leaving the *purva Ramayana*. However, he made an observation in a humble tone that his work might be read at least for the sake of his grand father. This gives some room for the guess that Mantri Bhaskara had already written the *purva Ramayana*, that is, BR and hence Tikkana had taken up the later, perhaps, with the object of completing the story. But Pingali Lakshmikantham is of the opinion that the RR of Gona Buddha Reddi (six cantos) must have been available by Tikkana's time and hence he took up the later story.⁴⁴ Whatever the reason might be, it is unfortunate that Tikkana, a master poet, did not write the *purva Ramayana*.

Tikkana's work appears to be more or less an independent poem inspite of the availability of the Sanskrit original. Some of the significant differences are: The story is given in a nutshell at the beginning and there is no description of the death of Rama unlike the original. Further, Tikkana's Rama appears to be an ideal man and a wise ruler. The dialogue between Rambha and Ravana, the passages relating to the repudiation of Sita, the wanderings of Sita and Rama in the pleasure garden are so superb in his work that they can be treated as *minor kavyas*.

Jayanti Ramabhattu, a later poet, completed in one canto the story that was left over by Tikkana towards the end.

⁴⁴ *Gautama Vyasamulu*, p. 127.

In this connection, it may be mentioned that Nannaya, the first among the poet-trio, is also said to have written a Ramayana under the title *Raghavabhyudayam*.⁴⁵ Even though there is no supporting evidence to this, it is interesting to note that all the three poets of the 'trio' have attempted the story of Rama.

The next work that deserves mention is that of Kankanti Paparaju who probably lived in the 17th century. He was faithful to the original and translated all the stories left over by Tikkana. His descriptions are elaborate and beautiful, the style being dignified. As his poem contains about 3,000 poetry and prose passages, it is generally considered as an elaborate work while that of Tikkana a concise poem.

Gona Kachabhupati and Vitthalaraju, the sons of Buddha Reddi, have written the Uttara Ramayana in the *dwipada* meter, as desired by their father, and thus they completed the RR. This was perhaps, composed in the period between 1320 and 1325.

Adhyatma Ramayana (AR)

Adhyatma Ramayana is generally believed to be a part of *Brahmanda Purana*. This has been questioned by modern research scholars like Cheltnat Achyuta Menon. His opinion is as follows: "Either Adhyatmam had an independent existence, or the compiler of Brahmandam has incorporated it in the bigger purana for reasons of his own."⁴⁶ The authorship of AR too is doubted. According to some, it is the work of Viswamitra.⁴⁷ Some would ascribe it to Vyasa.

AR is also popular in the Telugu country; but not as much as VR. It is said that one Kancherla Sarabhana of the 16th century translated the AR into Telugu.⁴⁸ Since this is not extant now, we are not in a position to assess its quality. However, it

⁴⁵ Bulusu Venkataramanayya, *Andhra Kavi Saptasati* (Madras, the author), 1956, p. 100.

⁴⁶ *Ezuttaccan and His Age*, p. 103.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 103. 'Mr. C. R. S. Iyengar adds the following note about AR believed to be a part of Brahmanda, but the internal evidence shows that it is related by Viswamitra.' John Dowson in his *Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology and Religion etc.* (1953) said as follows: 'The authorship of it (AR) is ascribed to Vyasa, but it is generally considered to be a part of the Brahmanda purana.'

⁴⁸ B. Ramaraju, 'Pandinatha Ramayanam', *Bharati*, May, 1961, pp. 3-8.

may be pointed out from the account given below that AR was very popular in the Telugu country in the 16th century.

While discussing the genesis of the AR in Malayalam, Achyuta Menon says as follows: 'Once a Brahmana Sanyasin presented a manuscript copy of the original Adhyatma written in Telugu (according to another version, Nagari) script to an Ampalappuza Raja, who wished to have it translated into Malayalam script so that he might read the rare work. Meppattur Bhattatiri, who happened to be at the palace at the time, was asked by the Raja to do the transcription or arrange for it. Since Meppattur did not know Telugu, Ezuttaccan was approached for the purpose, as he was conversant with all Dravidian scripts. In the course of transcription, the work was rendered into Malayalam verse by the poet'.⁴⁹ It is believed that the Sanyasin had brought the manuscript from Banares.

If the above account can be considered true, there is every reason to believe that AR was a popular work in the Telugu country also.

Among the available Telugu translations, the rendering of Kanada Peddana Somayaji (18th century) seems to be the earliest. But it now appears that it was translated already by Parasurama-pantula Lingamurti and Rapaka Sri Rama Kavi before Peddana Somayaji, but these translations have not been printed yet.⁵⁰

Later, Kotamaraju Nagayamatya (about 1860) and Mamidanna Subhadramma, a poetess, had translated into verse and *dwipada* and these have been published in 1924 and 1911 respectively. Kalahasti Subrahmanya Kavi had rendered this in six cantos in the form of *kirtanas* (songs) and this translation was published in 1911. These songs are widely sung and highly appreciated. There are a few more translations in prose and verse.

Vasishtha Ramayana too has been rendered into Telugu by Madiki Singana (14th century), Tarigonda Vengamamba, a poetess and Madduri Sambayya respectively.

Ananda Ramayana

Ananda Ramayana, which is supposed to be a work of Valmiki, also has attracted the attention of the Telugu poets. It is

⁴⁹ *Ezuttaccan And His Age*, pp. 103 and 104.

⁵⁰ 'Pandarinatha Ramayanam', *Bharati*, May 1961.

said that two renderings in verse have appeared. Chilukuri Srirama Sastri ascribes the authorship not to Valmiki but to Samarthā Ramadasa, the well-known saint-poet of Maharashtra.⁵¹ According to him, Valmiki is not at all the author of the Ananda Ramayanam and this appears to be true since it presents several deviations from the Ramayana of Valmiki. Moreover, one and the same author, namely, Valmiki could not have given two different versions of the same story.

The above Telugu version is a faithful rendering of the *Ananda Ramayana* by Samarthā Ramadasa and it contains four Kandas. They are as follows:

(1) *Sara Kanda* (2) *Tatra Kanda* (3) *Yaga Kanda* and (4) *Vilasa Kanda*. In turn, these have been divided into several *sargas* (chapters). It is significant to note that the *Sara Kanda* contains the entire story of the Ramayana and the remaining *kandas* highlight the greatness of Rama and his pilgrimage to several holy places.

Some of the deviations as found in this work are not only interesting but also worth considering.

In the Ananda Ramayana, Hanuman was born from one of the portions of the divine food (*payasa*). As the story goes on, Dasaratha gave the divine food to his three queens in equal proportions. But Kaikeyi thought that this action of her husband was an insult to her and therefore threw away her portion. It was found and collected by a *Gandharva* lady who left it on the mountain Anjana. Later, it was taken by Anjani devi and Hanuman was born to her. Thus the story of the birth of Hanuman is narrated.

Another deviation worth mentioning is about the characterization of Sita. In Valmiki's Ramayana, Sita uses harsh words against Lakshmana when he hesitates to obey her order that he should go to the rescue of Rama from the fake deer (Maricha) who cried Oh Sita! and Oh Lakshmana! At this particular juncture, she appears from her talk to be an ordinary woman who loses her temper when her wishes are not carried out. But the *Ananda Ramayana* gives a different version about Sita in this connection.

⁵¹ I could see only the translation done by Chilukuri Srirama Sastri. This has been published in 1956 by Ananda Ramayanam Karyalayam, Kanki padu.

According to the above, Rama and Sita have a dialogue, in camera, before the actual incident takes place. Rama then suggests to her that Sita, the *satvaguna* (the quality of excellence) woman may take shelter in him and the *rajoguna* (the quality of passion) Sita may enter fire. Thus the *tamasaguna* (the quality of darkness) Sita has been left over and it is she that uses the harsh language against Lakshmana. After the death of Ravana, Sita enters the fire not to satisfy Rama but to get back all the three *gunas*. This variation paints Sita in brighter colours.

It also states that Rama along with Sita reigns for eleven thousand years. He has several sons and grand-sons and he finally reaches the Vaikuntha. Among the several deviations that are found in this Ramayana, the following also deserve mention. Dasaratha has 700 wives; Ravana tries his best to foil the marriage of Kausalya to Dasaratha; Ravana is one of the suitors to marry Sita and he is put to shame in the marriage (*svayamvara*) hall; after reaching Ayodhya, Rama participates in the Dipavali festival; Rama gives back life to Bharata and Satrugna with the help of *Sanjeevani*, a medical herb; the importance of *Sri Vishnu Vrata* is explained; Rama preaches philosophy to Dasaratha in the presence of Kausalya; a meeting of Siva, Agastya and Rama takes place; Rama in the guise of a sage subdues the pride of Hanuman; Nala constructs the *Setu* by chanting the holy name of Rama.

In conclusion, it may be said that several Ramayanas have appeared in Telugu and that the influence of the Ramayana on Telugu literature is very old and unbroken. In common with other language poets, the Telugu poets also have regarded Rama as an incarnation of Vishnu.

Chapter IV

The Ramayana in Folk Songs

The Story of Rama and the Folk authors

Historically speaking, the folk authors too have been greatly inspired by the story of Rama. The result is that we have in Telugu and Tamil, as in other languages, several inspiring folk-songs describing the Ramayana story either in full or in parts. But, it is very difficult to determine their date and authorship as the folk-authors have generally remained anonymous in their compositions.. Further, several people may have worked at in the process of transmission from one generation of singers to another and often while communicating them among themselves. As F. J. Child remarks: 'A genuinely popular ballad can have no fixed and final form, no sole authentic version. There are texts but there is no text'.¹ It is also said that 'a folk-song is neither new nor old, because it is continually taking on new life; it is an individual flowering on a common stem'.² However, it may be pointed out that some of these folk-songs must be very old, though they might have lost their original forms or had their forms distorted. When we find textual differences in our old works written by scholars, it is natural that the folk-songs, not written and not preserved carefully, may have undergone several changes.

¹ F. J. Child, *English and Scottish Ballads*.

² *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

Palkuriki Somanatha,³ a celebrated Telugu poet of the 12th or 13th century, had referred in his *Panditaradhya Charitra* to several types of songs, some of which are now known only by their names.⁴ Regarding the source of one of his important works, *Basavapuranam*, he said that he had drawn inspiration from the old songs sung by the devotees.⁵ So, it is obvious from this that Somanatha, a devout student of the *desi* (indigenous) literature to which the songs and ballads belong, was not only inspired by the old songs but also instrumental in giving them a literary status.

Although the folk-literature has been pedantically neglected in the past, it has always received due recognition and patronage from the masses, generally illiterate and unsophisticated.⁶ In fact, folk-literature is still inspiringly alive in the rural parts of the country in as much as it represents the emotions and feelings of the villagers in their true colours. Of course, it may not possess the embellishment found in creative art. None the less, the folk-songs, being simple in character, natural in expression and above all being melodious arrest the attention of the scholars too. Some western scholars such as J. A. Boyle and Charles E. Gover⁷ were so enchanted by the folk-songs of Southern India that they began to collect and publish them. In fact, Boyle was the first scholar who discovered the importance and sweetness of the Telugu

³ Regarding the birth place and date of Somanatha, there are different and controversial theories as given below:

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| (1) 12th century | ... Veturi Prabhakara Sastri, introduction to <i>Basavapuranam</i> , 1st edition, 1926. |
| (2) 1247-1280 | ... Chilukuri Narayana Rao, introduction to <i>Panditaradhya Charitra</i> , 1939. |
| (3) 1190-1260 | ... N. Venkata Rao, introduction to <i>Basavapuranam</i> , 2nd edition, 1952. |
| (4) 1350 | ... N. Venkata Ramanayya, <i>Palkuriki Somanathudu Eppativadu</i> , 1960. |

⁴ *Tummeda padamulu*, *Prabhata padamulu*, *Parvata padumulu*, *Ananda Padamulu* and *Nivali padamulu* are some of the several types of songs the poet has mentioned.

⁵ *Basavapuranam*, (Madras, Andhra Granthamala). 1926, p. 5.

⁶ Of late, the position has changed in both Telugu and Tamil. Several collections of folk songs have been published. It is gratifying to note that B. Rama Raju of the Osmania University has been awarded the Ph.D. Degree for his Thesis on *Telugu Janapadageya Sahityamu*.

⁷ The second edition of Gover's *The Folk-songs of Southern-India* has been brought out in 1959 by Saiva Siddhanta Publishing Works, Madras.

folk-songs. He remarks: 'While the treasures of national poetry are being gleaned from so many languages, the store of the sweetest dialect of Southern India (Telugu) may not be overlooked and that the popular songs of the Telugu people may be collected'.⁸

The innumerable folk songs available in Telugu are so varied that they can be classified as *puranic*, historical and philosophical. Foremost among the *puranic* stories that have captured the fancy of the folk-authors is the story of the Ramayana in general and that of Sita in particular. Recently, a collection of forty two Ramayana songs in Telugu sung by women has been published and its editor 'Krishna Sri' feels that several of them may have been composed by women.⁹

This view appears to be correct in so far as the chastity of Sita and her tragic life have a more natural appeal to the women-folk than the prowess of Rama. Further, the women authors may have represented their silent sorrows and mute sufferings through the tragic incidents that occurred in Sita's life. A glance at some of the titles of the songs given below, will reveal the fact that the story of Sita has been dealt with in detail by the folk authors.

Sita Kalyanam (The marriage of Sita)

Sita Appagintalu (The 'Handing over' of Sita to Rama
and others)

Sitanu Attavarintiki Pamputa (Sending Sita to her husband's
house)

Sitammavari Alaka (The anger of Sita)

Sita Dagudumutalu (A kind of 'hide-and-seek' game
played by Sita)

Sita Chera (The imprisonment of Sita)

Sita Agnipravesam (Sita entering the fire)

Sitadevi Vevillu (Marks of Sita's pregnancy)

In several songs, Sita is mentioned as Sitangana. After

⁸ Telugu Ballad Poetry, *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. III, 1874, pp. 1-6.

⁹ *Strile Ramayanapu Patalu* (Hyderabad, Andhra Sarasvata Parishat), introduction, p. ii.

B. Rama Raju in his *Telugu Janapadageya Sahityamu* states that he has been able to collect about fifty printed songs based on the Ramayana story and about the same number of unpublished songs, p. 61.

taking leave of Lord Vishnu, she (Adilakshmi) enters a lotus in a lotus pond at Lanka, the capital of the king Ravana. When the servants of Ravana enter the pond to gather flowers, they hear a strange voice saying, 'I shall kill you.' This is at once conveyed to the Demon King. Then, accompanied by his followers, Ravana comes to the pond and plucks the flowers. He also hears the same voice. Trembling at it, he gives the flower to his wife Mandodari to examine it thoroughly. After a careful examination, she finds a female child in it. Later, it is predicted by the astrologers that if she (Sita) were to stay in Lanka further, the city would be destroyed. Then, Mandodari summons Vibhishana and tells him that the child found in the lotus is an incarnation of Adilakshmi and that she will be the wife of Rama. As directed, she is kept in a box and it is shoved into the sea. Finally, she is found by Janaka in the furrow of the plough.

The above is only a very brief account of the birth of Sita as found in a folk song entitled *Santa Govinda Namamulu*.¹⁰ This is, perhaps, the source of the saying in Telugu, *Sita putti, Lankaku chetu* (Sita was born and downfall for Lanka).

Several interesting details about Sita are found in the folk-songs. She is said to have shaken the bow of Siva. Then she was only a child. After her marriage to Rama, she spends eleven years at Ayodhya. At the very sight of the ten faces of Ravana, she faints on the ground like an uprooted mango tree. Then Ravana takes out that piece of earth on which Sita has fainted and places it in his chariot and flies by air. When Rama and his followers return to Ayodhya in the celestial car, *Pushpaka*, the sin of *Brahmahatya* (killing the Brahman Ravana) takes a form and follows the plane. Since Rama does not turn up as promised, Bharata and Guha decide to put an end to their lives and are about to enter the fire; fortunately, Hanuman conveys the happy news of Rama's return to Ayodhya and thus averts the double tragedy.

These details are not found in the VR. Some of them do not find a place even in the Telugu versions — RR and BR.

The folk-authors do not, generally, care for correctness. They are satisfied if the details given are convincing and interesting to them. The story of Urmila, the wife of Lakshmana, can be given as an illustration of this.

¹⁰ *Strila Ramayanapu Patalu* (Hyderabad, Andhra Sarasvata Parishat), 1955, pp. 19-51.

The Story of Urmila

After Lakshmana's self-exile to be with Rama and Sita, his wife Urmila falls fast asleep for fourteen long years. After defeating Ravana in the battle, Rama returns to Ayodhya. Then Lakshmana, as directed by Rama, goes to his apartment to meet his wife, who is still asleep. At first, she does not recognise him as her husband. She mistakes him for a stranger and hence warns him against approaching her, saying that Ravana has lost his all because of his evil desire for another's wife. The story goes on further.

It is not known how Urmila comes to know of all these incidents that have taken place in Lanka when she has been supposedly in a deep slumber all the while. The critic may question the propriety in the statement of Urmila, but the folk-author or his audience, perhaps, find satisfaction in her reply since it is factually correct and convincing.

Sometimes folk-authors invent stories if the available details are not appealing or convincing to them. It is said that Rama has abandoned Sita, though she is pregnant at the time, on the hearsay report of the washerman's aspersions on her chastity. Perhaps, this does not appeal to a certain folk-author and he invents a story, which is as follows:¹¹

The banishment of Sita

Surpanakha, the sister of Ravana has not forgotten Rama even after the death of her brothers and others in the battle. She thinks that Sita is the greatest hurdle in her way and so she comes to Ayodhya in the guise of a mendicant and approaches Rama who is then about to start for hunting. By his leave, she is taken to Sita who receives her with respect and gives her several valuable gifts. But the mendicant does not accept them. Instead, she asks Sita to draw for her the picture of Ravana. On hearing this strange request, Sita begins to tremble. She says that she has not cared to see that evil man, Ravana, her stay in Lanka for about ten months notwithstanding. At last, after persuasion, Sita could draw only the toe of Ravana and the mendicant is satisfied. Later the drawing is completed by the mendicant.

Then Surpanakha goes to Brahma and requests him to give

¹¹ *Telugu Jambudvīpa Sahityam*, pp. 67-70.

life to that drawing of Ravana. Brahma takes pity on her and fulfills her wish. Afterwards, she leaves the picture at Ayodhya and retires to her place.

Ravana's picture begins to tease Sita by asking her to return to Lanka with him. Every one in the palace is surprised at the strange behaviour of the drawing. It is thrown in a well and into the flames. But curiously enough, it comes out unhurt and begins to tease Sita again. Then she places it under her bed, chanting the name of Rama. It does not come out and thus Sita gets rid of the trouble temporarily. Meanwhile, Rama returns from hunting. But nobody reports to him the acts of that drawing. Sita too keeps silent. It is thus kept a guarded secret. That night, Rama seeks his wife's company. The drawing of Ravana then pushes Rama away and stands before him. Looking at this, Rama becomes suspicious of his wife's chastity. As a result, poor Sita is again sent to the forest by Rama who turns a deaf ear to the entreaties of the inmates of the palace.

It is interesting to note that there is a picottah song (*etrap pattu*) in Tamil, which describes Sita's drawing of Ravana's picture. It is said in the song that she has also painted the grandeur of Lanka¹².

While discussing the probable source of the above story, K. V. Jagannathan states that he has found it in a Bengali Ramayana written by a poetess by name Chandravati who is said to have lived in the 16th or 17th century¹³. It is found that the story as narrated in it differs from that of the Telugu version though the main incident — Sita's banishment for having drawn the picture of Ravana — remains the same in both versions.

In the Bengali version, Surpanakha does not come into the picture at all. Kukiya, daughter of Kaikeyi, plays the role attributed to Surpanakha. As desired by her, Sita draws the full picture of Ravana on a fan. Afterwards, Sita goes to sleep. Then the mischievous Kukiya places that fan on the breast of the innocent Sita and soon approaches Rama and urges him to see his wife. Accordingly he does. The result is the banishment of Sita to the forest.

Several stories of this kind are found in the folk-songs. It is,

¹² K. V. Jagannathan, *Atulas Atulam* (Madras, Ananda Nilayam) 1959, p. 95.

¹³ Ibid, pp. 96-98.

perhaps, not quite necessary to trace their source. Since some of these stories are found in the classical versions like RR and BR, it may be said that the folk-authors may have drawn inspiration from them, deviating from the original, or the authors of the classical Ramayanas may have recorded these stories which must have been very popular with the masses at that time, as already done by Palluriki Somanatha. Or the folk authors must have invented these stories to satisfy their audiences. Whatever the truth may be, these folk-songs are even to this day very popular in the villages;¹⁴ and the rural womenfolk sing them with great reverence. Further, it is this reverential attitude towards Rama and their immense love for the Ramayana story that must have inspired them to invent stories glorifying the acts of Rama, Sita and other characters. Thus the folk-authors have kept alive the Ramayana story and several legends connected with it through the ages.

I give below the stories of two songs in Telugu *Lakshmana-devara navvu* (the laughter of Lakshmana) and *Urmiladevi nidra* (the sleep of Urmila) to understand better the emotions of the folk-authors. These two may be called twin stories.

The Laughter of Lakshmana

After defeating Ravana, Rama returns to Ayodhya, along with his wife and brother Lakshmana. Later, Rama was crowned in the presence of all the Gods, sages and others.

At the time of coronation, Lakshmana, at one stage laughs which creates a stir among those present. Each one of them including Siva thinks that Lakshmana laughs at him only and hence feels offended. Rama too mistakes the laughter and gets wild against his brother. He, at once, draws his sword from the

¹⁴ The fact that the villagers in every country are the better custodians of folk-songs can be illustrated from the following passage which is taken from the *Standard Dictionary of Folk-lore, Mythology and Legend*, Vol. II edited by Maria Leach (Pub. & Wagnalls Company, New York). "Folk song comprises the poetry and music of groups whose literature is perpetuated not by writing and print, but through oral tradition. These groups, primarily rural, are better able to preserve some of the older culture of the national unit of which they form a part, than the population of the cities with its more sophisticated, more international civilization, which is subject to faster changes and fluctuation of fashion." (p. 1033).

scabbard and demands of him the reason for his laughter. Then, Lakshmana falls at his feet and explains as follows:

‘While we were staying in a hut in the forest, one night, you (Rama) were fast asleep. As usual, armed with bow and arrow, I was on the watch. All the creatures in the forest were also in deep sleep. Then I found to my great surprise *Nidra devi* (goddess of sleep) weeping. I approached her and enquired the reasons to which she replied that though the entire world was sleeping, he (Lakshmana) was awake.

Then I told her that I was in the service of my brother and sister-in-law and so I should not sleep. Further, I requested her to haunt my wife, Urmila, so that she would sleep all through the day and night. Then she left. And again, *Nidra devi* has come and haunted me today. So, I laughed.’ So saying Lakshmana goes to sleep.

On hearing the story, Rama repents and compliments his brother for his selfless service and spotless love for him. He feels ashamed of his haste and desires to put an end to his own life with the same sword he has taken out from the scabbard. But, he is prevented from doing so.

Urmiladevi's Sleep

Urmila, the wife of Lakshmana, is one of the minor characters in the Ramayana. It is a pity that she has not received due recognition from both the old and modern poets. Even Valmiki does not say much about her, probably because she is not closely connected with the main story. But her sacrifice and silent suffering have captured at least one Telugu folk-author who has composed a long and moving song in appreciation of Urmila. It is very popular and sung by the women folk in our villages.¹⁵ To outline the theme:

Lakshmana volunteers to follow Rama to the forests. Sita also follows her husband against the latter's wish that she should not follow him. On seeing her husband going to the forests, Urmila becomes anxious to follow him and urges him to take her

¹⁵ Devendra Satyarthi, a devout student of Indian folklore and an author in Punjabi and Hindi was considerably moved by this soul-filling song and translated it into English and published the same in the *Modern Review* in 1940.

too. But, Lakshmana is unwilling to do so and advised her to stay back. Then as a devoted wife, she obeys her husband. From the day Lakshmana retires to the forests to the day he returns to Ayodhya, that is, for fourteen long years, she remains in her bed unconscious, in deep slumber, thinking of her husband only.

After the stipulated period of fourteen years, Lakshmana returns to Ayodhya along with his brother and sister-in-law. But, unfortunately, he does not care to see his devoted wife and as usual is engrossed in the service of Rama. It is only Sita, being a woman, who sympathises with Urmila. She urges her husband to relieve Lakshmana from the service so that he may go and meet his wife.

As suggested by Rama, Lakshmana then goes to the apartment of Urmila. Having been in sleep for a long period, she at first, fails to recognise her husband. She is hardly able to open her eyes fully. Yet she has been aware of Sita's abduction by Ravana as well as the consequences. So she says:

'Is n't it by having the desire
of acquiring another's wife
that Indra's body was spoiled?
Is n't by having the desire
of acquiring another's wife
that Ravana suffered utter destruction?
And knowing all this before
O, you came to do such a wrong
O, have you no sister
Or mother like me?'

Then comes Lakshmana's reply:

'I am Rama's brother
who else is like him
in the whole creation?
And am I not the son-in-law
of King Janaka.
Putting Ravana to death
We brought our Sita back
If I wrongly raised my hand,
O, moon-faced woman,
I'd myself become infamous,

If you won't get up, my love,
I won't live any longer.'¹⁰

With tears rolling in his eyes, Lakshmana again says:
'I'll kill myself.'

Urmila immediately gets up with a shock. Convinced of Lakshmana's identity, the lotus-eyed Urmila then kneels at her husband's feet. Her joy knows no bounds when she recognises Lakshmana as her husband. He also feels happy in the company of his wife.

As Urmila stops speaking, Lakshmana, overwhelmed with sorrow, asks: 'O, why still feel sorry?'

He begins in a soothing tone:

'In some previous birth, my love
we might have separated some pious
husband and wife that if several
ages pass, we can't resist
the law of *Karma*'

Then Lakshmana explains to her in detail Sita's abduction by Ravana.

Thus the whole story from the beginning to the end has been so well composed that the reader gets a glimpse of the pure and tender heart of a devoted Hindu wife.

Owing to the fact that these two stories are closely related to each other, they may be called twin stories. The reason for Urmila's long sleep can be found in the story of Lakshmana's laughter. The folk-poets thus cleverly account for her long sleep.

Concise Ramayana in a Folk-song

There is a long folk-song in Telugu entitled *Santapana Ramayanam*, meaning concise Ramayana. This is generally sung by the womenfolk. Though it is faithful to the classical version of the Ramayana in most of its details, still one can notice several

¹⁰ These lines have been taken from the English rendering of Devendra Satyarthi (*Modern Review*, April, 1940, pp. 422-423).

details which are not found in Valmiki's epic. A brief account of the same is given below.

The song commences with the remark that Paramasiva begins to narrate the story to Pārvati, on her request:

There lived in Ayodhya a king by name Dasaratha. He led a happy life with his three wives, Kousalya, Sumitra and Kaika (Kaikeyi)¹⁷. One day, when he was in the company of Kousalya, he told her that there was no *sadgati* (salvation) for those who have no children. He lamented that their riches were like the full-moon light in the forest. He, therefore, suggested that he should do *putrakameshti*. Accordingly, he performed it. As a result, the Fire-God, presented him a gold vessel full of divine food (*payasa*). The king distributed it to his three wives and they became pregnant after taking it. The king got four sons, and he was very happy.

One day, the sage, Visvamitra came to Dasaratha and reported that the *Rakshasas* living in the forest were giving him much trouble and sought his help. The king at once became terror stricken and said that he could not send Rama to his help as he was only a boy and ignorant in archery. Then the sage said that his sons were born with the *amsa* of Vishnu (characteristic of the God) and hence he need not doubt their prowess. The king was then satisfied and sent Rama and Lakshmana along with the sage.

Rama and Lakshmana followed the sage and killed Maricha and other demons, as suggested by him. On the way, at one place, Rama transformed a stone lying in the dust into a sweet maid (Ahalya). Afterwards, they proceeded to Mithila. There, Rama married Sita, the daughter of Janaka after breaking the bow of Siva. While returning to Ayodhya, he defeated Parasurama who attacked him.

One day, Dasaratha expressed his desire to his ministers and others present in the court that he would like to crown Rama as he had come of age (sixteen years) and that he himself had become very old. Then preparations for the coronation were commenced. Meanwhile, Manthara, the servant maid of Kaika, poisoned the mind of her mistress. She instigated her to ask for the two boons which Dasaratha had promised her in the past. Then Kaika summoned Rama and urged him to fulfil the words of his father.

¹⁷ Kaikeyi is also called as Kaika in the Telugu region.

She suggested that Rama should leave the country and stay in the forest for fourteen years and that Bharata rule the kingdom. On hearing these words, tears rolled in the eyes of Rama and he became sad. Immediately he went to his father and informed him of the two boons of Kaika. The king became much agitated and soon left for the palace of Kaika. He urged her to ask for some other boon. But she was firm and even threatened that she would kill herself after killing her son if her boons were not granted.

Sita and Lakshmana followed Rama to the forest. Sita was only twelve years old then. Still she wanted to follow her husband as a creeper cannot live without a tree and a house cannot be bright without a light.

Rama, Sita and Lakshmana crossed the river Ganges in the boat arranged by the good natured Guha. Rama was pleased at his devotion. When the boat was moving in the deep waters of the river, Sita became afraid; but Rama consoled her. Seeing her unable to walk in the forest, Rama chided her by saying that she came to the forest against his wish and hence she should bear the suffering. They broke their journey at some sage's hermit. The sages present there gave them a warm reception and informed Rama of the death of his father. On hearing this, Rama was immersed in sorrow, though he was the very lord of the three worlds and God-incarnate. He wept for the loss of his father. Then he performed the obsequies for Dasaratha. Afterwards, Rama and Sita stayed in a thatched cottage built by Lakshmana.

One day, Sita saw a golden deer (Maricha) at the entrance of the cottage and she was very much enamoured of it. She requested her husband to get the animal for her. Rama soon started turning a deaf ear to his brother's warning. The deer dragged Rama to a great distance and at last he shot it by his fire-dart. As a result, the golden deer, assuming a demon's form, fell down and cried, 'O Sita, O Lakshmana.' On hearing these words, Sita thought that something untoward had befallen her husband and hence, in anxiety, urged Lakshmana to find the whereabouts of Rama. But Lakshmana replied that nothing would happen to his brother, even though all the seven seas united together or dried up or all the fourteen worlds were burnt. But Sita, dissatisfied with his reply, asked him whether he was not the brother of Bharata. One has aspired for the kingdom and the other for the wife of his brother. Lakshmana could not hear these

harsh words, which like lances pierced his ears. Then Lakshmana drew seven lines around the cottage and left the place by urging the serpents living in the ant hills and the animals in the forest to protect Sita.

As soon as Lakshmana went in search of Rama, Ravana disguised himself as an old Brahman and appeared before the cottage. Sita received him. In reply to his enquiry regarding her husband, she narrated all that had happened. Then the fake Brahman asked Sita to come away with him to Lanka leaving the company of Rama who has lost his kingdom and who has been wandering in the forests. Then he showed his ten heads. Sita became terror-stricken at the very sight of the heads and immediately swooned on the ground.

Thereupon, Ravana took out the earth on which Sita was lying like an uprooted mango tree and placed it on his chariot and then flew into the air.

When Ravana was thus carrying Sita in the air, she bitterly wept and her cries were heard by Jatayu, a valorous bird. The bird tried its best to rescue her from the *Rakshasa* king; but could not. When the aerial chariot reached the mountain Risyamuka, Sita removed her jewels and tied them in a cloth and dropped it on the mountain. After reaching Lanka, Ravana kept her in the Asoka garden.

The Demon-King urged Sita to join his company so that she could have several comforts in life. Disgusted at his words, she took a blade of grass in her hand and spoke thus: 'O! Ye! *Rakshasa*, there is a gulf of difference between you and Rama. It is like the difference between a dog and a cow, a mosquito and an elephant, and a fox and a tiger.' Enraged at her words, Ravana was about to kill her with the powerful *Chandrayudham*. The incident was averted by Mandodari and other ladies. After Ravana retired to his palace, Trijata, one of the guards, narrated to Sita her dream in which she found the death of Ravana at the hands of Rama.

After killing the golden deer, Rama started for his hermitage. But on the way he found his brother who informed him of the harsh words of Sita. Both the brothers reached the cottage and found that it was empty. It was like a well without water, a field without crop, a tree without fruits, a temple without the idol of God, a kingdom without a king, a lady without her husband,

a night without the moon, a day without the sun, the recitation of the *Veda* on the day of *padayami* (a day on which the *Veda* should not be recited) and a house without a light. So looked the hermitage without Sita. Afterwards, they searched several places but could not find her. While wandering thus, they found at one place the wounded Jatayu who informed them of the abduction of Sita. (Later Rama performed the obsequies for the bird. Before they reached the *Risyamuka* mountain, they met Sabari, a lady devotee, on the way who offered them fruits.

On the *Risyamuka* mountain, Rama made friendship with Sugriva, Hanuman and other monkey leaders. He assured Sugriva that he would get him the kingdom from his brother Vali and he in turn assured Rama of their help in the search for Sita. Meanwhile, the jewels dropped by Sita were brought to the presence of Rama. Looking at them, he swooned and regained senses after some time. Then he asked his brother to examine them as to whether they belonged to Sita. Lakshmana replied that the anklets did belong to Sita and he also identified some other jewels. Afterwards, Rama killed Vali standing behind the seven *tala* trees and made Sugriva the king of Kishkindha. He also made Angada, the son of Vali, as minister and consoled his mother Tara. As things settled thus, Rama asked Hanuman to find out the way for Lanka and see Sita and convey her the message that the downfall of Lanka was nearing.

Hanuman entered the City of Lanka and searched for Sita in several places. At last, he found her sitting under a tree in the Asoka garden. When she doubted his identity, Hanuman gave her the ring given by Rama. Only then she placed her confidence in him and told him that she had been suffering a lot as a result of the harsh words she had spoken to Lakshmana. Finally, Hanuman took leave of her and received her head-jewel, *chudamani*. Afterwards, he destroyed the beautiful garden of Ravana and killed his son *Akshaya*. Finally he was captured by the *Rakshasa* warriors and taken to the presence of Ravana. Hanuman urged Ravana to give back Sita to Rama and thus surrender himself. But Ravana was adamant and he ordered that the monkey should be killed by setting fire to his tail. The order was carried out. Hanuman caused great havoc to Lanka and several people thought that it was a foreteller of the ruin of Lanka that was soon to come. Afterwards, Hanuman returned

to Rama and informed him of the safety of Sita and gave him the head-jewel given by her.

Later, Nila, Jambavan and other monkey leaders constructed a bridge across the sea. Accompanied by a great army of monkeys, elephants and horses, Rama and Lakshmana fought with Ravana and others. Ravana was killed in the battle. At the suggestion of Rama, Lakshmana brought Sita to his presence. Then she was asked to enter the fire and she did accordingly. Meanwhile, Dasaratha who came there from heaven enquired Rama about his wife. Rama replied that there was no use of thinking about her as she was already burnt in the fire. Then the Fire-God came out and handed over Sita to Rama.

Finally, Rama, Sita and others left for Ayodhya. On the way, Rama narrated to Sita all the incidents that took place after she was abducted by Ravana. Meanwhile, Hanuman went to Nandigrama to inform Bharata of the arrival of Rama. Bharata gladly received Rama. As soon as Rama and Lakshmana reached Ayodhya, they went to the palace immediately where they consoled their mothers for the death of Dasaratha. When everything was thus settled, Rama was crowned. Rambha, Urvashi and Menaka danced on the occasion while the *Kinneras* and others played the *bheri* and other musical instruments. Vasishta, Jabali and other sages blessed him. Then Rama began to rule the Kosala country along with his three brothers.

Folk-songs in Tamil

There are several folk-songs in Tamil extolling the prowess of Rama. In one of them, a vivid description of his arrows is made. The arrows of Rama, it is said, go like thunder, making huge noise; they travel as quick as wind and rain.¹⁸ There is an interesting *etrup-pattu* (picottah song) wherein the entire story of the Ramayana is narrated.¹⁹

It is also worthy of note that the story of Rama is narrated in different forms like *Ammanai*, *Kummi*, *Kavadic-chintu* etc. Some of the modern writers also have written folk songs dealing with the story of Rama. In this connection, the following works may be mentioned.

¹⁸ Ki. Va. Jagannathan, *Nadodi Ilakkiyam*, pp. 27-28.

¹⁹ *Mullai Manam*, p. 92.

<i>Name of the work</i>	<i>Name of the Author</i>
Iramayanac Chintu	T. Vaidyalingam Chettiyar
Iramayanak Kappal	K. Tirumalaisami Iyengar
Iramayanak Kirtanaikal	Muthusami Kavirayar
Iramayanak-Kummi	C. Ramaswami Kavirayar
Iramayanak-Kummi	Venkatarama Iyer
Iravanan Kummi	C. Munisami Mudaliar
Ramar Talattu	A. Ratnasababhupati Mudali
	P. Narayanaswami Pillai
Ramayana Elappattu	C. P. Srinivasa Iyengar
Ramayanak Kavadic-Chintu	M. Narayanaswamy Pillai
Ramayanak-Kummi	Alakia Chokkanatha Pillai
	Murugadasa Swami
Rama Singarac Chintu	Tyagappadasa

There is also a *Ramayanam*, called *Takkai Ramayanam* written by Empiran Kavirayar whose patron was one Morur Gangeyan. Only a portion of it has been published.²⁰ Besides, there are several folk songs describing some interesting episodes which are not found in KR. Sita's drawing the picture of Ravana, a little squirrel helping Rama in constructing the causeway across the sea and other fascinating stories which are not found in KR are narrated in folk songs. There are also some songs (*vedikkaip badalgal*) which are meant exclusively for making fun.

A few stray verses based on the *Ramayana* are also available in Tamil. In one such verse, an interesting story is narrated. It is said that Sita desires to take with her to Ayodhya a grinding stone from Lanka. She also expresses her wish to Hanuman. When he is about to lift the stone, Jambavan comes there and asks Hanuman why he is lifting the stone. After knowing the wish of Sita, Jambavan just laughs to himself and approaches her.

²⁰ I understand from M. P. Periaswamy Thooran that efforts are being made to bring out the entire manuscript in a book form. T. P. Meenakshisundaran broadcast a talk on this *Ramayanam* from the Madras station of the All India Radio.

The Saraswati Mahal library, Tanjore, has published in 1969 a concise *Ramayana* entitled *Kuyil Ramayanam*. This is also called *Kokila Ramayanam*. This contains 128 songs and the common refrain is *Koovay Kuyile*.

Then he tells her that he has seen several things which could not be seen later by others — churning of the ocean, Brahma with five heads, mountains having two wings, the tasty water of the seas, the attractive guise of Manmatha, the white throat of Siva and Indra with two eyes. But he has not known in his long life that a thing given away by one is later asked for. Sita then realises that she should not take the grinding stone since every particle of the sand in Lanka belonged to Vibhishana who is made king by Rama. This story which is prevalent in the Tamil country is narrated in a stray verse beginning with the line '*Alaikadal kadaiyak kanden.....*'²¹

There are also some works in Tamil narrating the stories of Mahiravana and other characters. Among such works, *Mayil-ravanam Katai* and *Satakantha Ramayanam Katai* deserve mention. They show that the story of Rama is popular among the common people also.

The common belief in our country is that *Ramarajya* symbolises happiness and peace. This belief is well expressed in the following Telugu folk-song.

' Why was the monkey born?
to cut the branches of trees.
Why should the branches be cut?
to make a chariot.
Why should the chariot be made?
to help Rama ascend it.
Why should Rama ascend it?
to kill Ravana.
Why should Ravana be killed?
to bring Sita back.
Why should Sita be brought?
to enable Rama reign.
Why should Rama reign?
so that people may live in happiness.'

It can be seen from the above that the folk authors too have been greatly influenced by the story of the Ramayana and that the Indian thought is well preserved in the folk-songs. The folk songs

²¹ *Mullai Manam*, p. 106.

contain a good number of interesting episodes which are not found either in Valmiki's poem or in the different language versions based on it. Perhaps, some of them may be the inventions of the folk authors themselves.

However, some of the episodes found in folk songs are narrated in some of the Ramayanas written by the scholar-poets. It is likely that they drew inspiration from the folk authors and vice versa. Presumably, some of the folk authors may have derived inspiration only from the language poets. Since some of the episodes are common to both Tamil and Telugu folk songs, it may be stated that there are some common beliefs regarding the story of Rama among the millions who speak these two languages.

Chapter V

Deviations From Valmiki in Ranganatha Ramayanam and Kamba Ramayanam

An attempt is made in this chapter to show how the story has been narrated in RR and KR, *kanda* by *kanda*, highlighting the deviations from the original, namely, Valmiki's poem.

BALA KANDA

The main incidents, as given in RR and KR, are mentioned below for a comparative study.

Ranganatha Ramayanam

Obeisance to the Gods and poets like Valmiki, Vyasa and Sukabrahma

Dialogue between Narada and Valmiki

The story of the Ramayana given in a nutshell

The City of Ayodhya

Greatness of the king Dasaratha

* The following editions of RR and KR are mainly consulted.

Ranganatha Ramayanam

Edited by Mallampalli Somasekhara Sarma and Tirumala Venkata Rangacharyulu, published by Rayalu & Company, Cuddapa, 1958.

Kamba Ramayanam

Edited by Vai. Mu. Gopalakrishnamachariyar (with commentary) published by Vai Mu. Gopalakrishnamachariyar and Company, Madras, 1957.

- Dasaratha thinks of performing *putrakameshti*
- The story of Risyasringa
- Dasaratha commences the *putrakameshti* under the guidance of Risyasringa
- The request of the Gods to Brahma
- The gods request Vishnu to kill Ravana
- The *Yajnapurusha* gives to Dasaratha the sweet food, *pajasa*
- The birth of Rama, Lakshmana and others
- The childhood of the king's sons
- The request of the sage Visvamitra to Dasaratha
- Dasaratha agrees to send Rama, Lakshmana with the sage, after hearing the advice of Vasishtha
- The story of the Anga country
- Visvamitra narrates the story of Tataka, a female *rakshasa*
- The killing of Tataka
- Visvamitra presents to Rama *astra* and *sastra*
- The story of *Siddhasrama* or *Vamanasrama*
- Rama and Lakshmana protect the *yajna* of Visvamitra
- Rama and Lakshmana, accompanied by Visvamitra, start to the city of Mithila
- The story of Kausambi
- The genealogy of Visvamitra
- The story of the birth of Kumaraswami
- The story of the river Ganges
- The story of the sons of Sagara
- The story of the churning of the milky ocean
- The story of *maruts*
- Rama, Lakshmana and the sage reach Mithila
- Satananda, the son of Ahalya and *purohit* of Janaka tells Rama the greatness of Visvamitra. The story of the sage is told elaborately.
- The story of the 'Bow of Siva'
- The breaking of the Bow.
- Dasaratha and his company start to Mithila
- The genealogy of Dasaratha
- The genealogy of Janaka
- The marriage of Sita
- Parasurama attacks Rama (on the way) when the latter starts for Ayodhya

The defeat of Parasurama
 Rama and others reach Ayodhya.

Kamba Ramayanam

Obeisance to the Almighty and Valmiki
 In praise of the river Sarayu
 Description of the Kosala country
 The greatness of Ayodhya
 The greatness of Dasaratha
 The Gods complain to Vishnu of their sufferings
 Dasaratha thinking of performing *putrakameshti*
 A *bhuta* emerges from the *homa* fire and places on the ground
 a plate containing *amrita pinda*.
 The descent of Rama
 The sage Visvamitra approaches the king Dasaratha
 Rama and Lakshmana accompany Visvamitra
 The killing of Tataka
 The story of the river Gomati
 The story of Mavali or Mahabali
 Rama and Lakshmana protect the *yajna* done by Visvamitra.
 Rama, Lakshmana and Visvamitra start to Mithila
 The story of Durvasa cursing Indra
 The churning of the milky ocean
 The story of the Ganges
 The story of Ahalya
 Rama and others go to Mithila
 Rama and Sita see and love each other before the marriage
 Satananda narrates to Rama the greatness of Visvamitra.
 The story of Sunasepha
 The story of the 'Bow of Siva'
 The story of Sita
 Dasaratha starts to Mithila (the description of the journey is
 very elaborate)
 Halt at the Mountain Chandrasaila
 Halt at a pleasure garden
 Sports with waters and taking wine
 Janaka's welcome to Dasaratha
 Rama's procession in the streets of Mithila
 The decorated Sita was brought to the marriage *mantap*
 The marriage of Sita and Rama

The defeat of Parasurama
 Rama and others reach Ayodhya

It can be seen from the above that RR contains at the beginning a dialogue between the sage Narada and Valmiki and a very brief account of the story of the Ramayana while KR commences with the actual story. Valmiki in the first three *sargas* mentions a dialogue between Narada and Valmiki and this throws light on the outstanding qualities of Rama. It is only in the fifth *sarga*, that Kusa and Lava begin to sing the Ramayana as composed by Valmiki in the court of Rama at Ayodhya. Then the story goes on.

The descriptions of the river Sarayu, of the country Kosala and of the city of Ayodhya are fairly elaborate in KR. Kamban painstakingly describes the sturdy fort walls, the beautiful buildings and flags hoisted at the top of those buildings, the maritime trade, the pastimes of the people and several other things. All these indicate the prosperity of the country and the grandeur of the city. In RR, description of Ayodhya is made with restraint. The poet says simply that on the banks of Sarayu, in the country of Kosala, there flourishes a city, Ayodhya which looks like an ornament to the earth. Some more details are provided. One of them is that all the citizens of the city are ardent devotees of Lord Vishnu.¹ Then the poet speaks of the greatness of the ruler Dasaratha.

Dasaratha

In KR, Dasaratha is said to have ruled for sixty thousand years, subduing his foes.² One of his worries is that calamity and confusion may afflict the world after his death. One day, he discloses his uneasiness to the great Vasishtha and seeks his advice. Moved by his words, the sage thinks for a while. Then he remembers a promise given once by Lord Vishnu to the gods that he would arrest the activities of the *Rakshasas* whose mission seems to destroy the good. Vasishtha further recalls the episode wherein the gods first request Lord Siva to help them.³ But he regrets

¹ RR, p. 10.

² KR, 1-5-3.

³ Ibid, 1-5-6.

Some scholars are of the view that this passage is a later addition.

his inability to kill the *Rakshasas* and suggests that they should all go to Brahma for help. Finally they approach Vishnu and detail the mischievous activities of the demons in general and of Ravana in particular. Then Vishnu assures them that he would soon take birth as the son of Dasaratha.

After recalling the above in detail, Vasishtha suggests that Dasaratha may perform a *yaga* which rewards him with sons endowed with great valour. The king readily and happily agrees to this suggestion and asks the sage for further details regarding the *yaga*.

Now, let us examine how this particular incident is narrated in RR.

Dasaratha is unhappy because he has no children and that he is getting older day by day. He, therefore, summons all his ministers and addresses them as follows: 'I have lived for several years. I have done several sacrifices (*yagas*) and made several gifts. I have everything in plenty. But I have only one worry, namely, I am childless. A childless person will not attain the higher world. Hence, I wish to possess male children. First, I shall do the *asvamedha* (horse sacrifice) and then *putrakameshti*'.⁴

Afterwards, Vasishtha and others are called for. The king asks the sage to help him perform the sacrifice. Accordingly, Vasishtha assures him of their help and tells the king that he will get children after performing *putrakameshti*. Dasaratha feels very happy at these words. When he retires to his palace, he tells the queens of his desire.

The king is elated, and alone when Suta approaches the king and narrates to him the story of Risyasringa, a great sage, under whose direction Dasaratha later performs the *putrakameshti*. During that sacrifice the gods come to receive personally their concerned oblations. Then they remember Ravana and his mischievous activities. They immediately approach Brahma and request him to conceive a plan by which Ravana could be destroyed. Brahma then replies that the Demon-King would neither be killed by the gods, nor the *Gandharvas*, nor the *Rakshasas*. He would be killed only by man. Brahma further says that Ravana was no other than that Hiranyakasipu who was killed by an earlier incarnation (Narasimha, man-lion) of Lord Vishnu.

⁴ RR, p. 10.

Afterwards, as suggested by Brahma, all the gods approach Vishnu and request him to take birth as the son of Dasaratha and protect the world by killing the wicked Ravana. Vishnu readily agrees to help them.⁵

It can be noticed from the above accounts that they differ from each other though their common aim remains the same. Kamban's Dasaratha has great reverence for his family preceptor and guide, Vasishtha. To him, he has always looked like the personification of Brahma himself.⁶ He discloses his worry only to his teacher and seeks his advice. He does not consult his ministers in this regard. According to KR, it is Vasishtha, not any minister, who tells the king the story of Risyasringa. All this shows that Kamban's Dasaratha has greater regard for a sage than anybody else. In fact, in the course of his dialogue with his teacher, he expresses his anxiety about the plight of the ascetics after his death.⁷

The Telugu version appears to be close to the original. In RR, Dasaratha himself expresses his desire to perform both *asvamedha* and *putrakameshti*. First, he discloses this to his ministers and then to his teacher Vasishtha and others. In RR, Vasishtha appears to be a mere teacher and the name of another teacher Vamadeva, as found in the original, is absent. Further, in RR, Suta narrates the story of Risyasringa⁸ while in Valmiki's poem, Sumantra the trusted minister of the king tells the story.

Under the able guidance of Risyasringa, Dasaratha performs the *putrakameshti*. The gods are satisfied with it. Then a beautiful person with a gold vessel containing the divine food (*payasa*) emerges from the sacred fire and appears before Dasaratha. He is no other than the *Tajnapurusha*. Dasaratha receives the vessel with great reverence and afterwards distributes the ambrosia to his queens. The narration of RR of the above incident is very close to the original.⁹ But this is somewhat differently stated in KR.

According to KR, a *bhuta* (ghost) comes out of the sacred fire

⁵ RR, pp. 10 and 11.

⁶ KR, 1-5-1.

⁷ Ibid, 1-5-4.

⁸ RR, p. 10.

⁹ Ibid, p. 18.

and disappears into the fire soon after placing on the ground a plate containing *amrita pinda* which is distributed to the queens by Dasaratha.¹⁰

The birth of Rama

The details given by RR and KR regarding the birth of Rama are very close to the original. But RR states that Rama was born on Wednesday (Budhavasaramu).¹¹ This additional detail is found in other Telugu versions, namely BR¹² and even the Ramayanam by Katta Varadaraju which is generally regarded as a faithful rendering of Valmiki's poem.¹³

It is stated in KR that a horoscope has been drawn for Rama and his brothers as well.¹⁴ It is further stated that the naming ceremony (*namakaranam*) has taken place on the thirteenth day¹⁵ while it is the eleventh day in RR.

The childhood of Rama

While KR is silent about the childhood of Rama, RR speaks of it and even mentions an incident. One day, when Rama and his friends play a game using a ball and a stick, Manthara the servant maid of Kaikeyi passes that way. She hits the ball with her hands, for which Rama punishes her by breaking her leg with the playing stick. She immediately reports the matter to Kaikeyi who, in turn, informs the king. Then Dasaratha requests Vasishtha to teach his sons the Vedas and other branches of learning.¹⁶

Though this incident is not found in VR, the poet may have

¹⁰ KR, 1-5-86 and 87.

¹¹ RR, p. 19.

Though KR has not mentioned the day, the commentator Vai. Mu. Gopalakrishnamachariyar has stated that Rama was born on Wednesday; but no authority in support of his statement has been quoted. (KR, Vol. I, p. 202).

¹² BR, 1-167.

¹³ *Sri Ramayanam* (Tanjore Saraswati Mahal series, No. 12), 1950, p. 70.

Malla Ramayanam (MR) states that Rama and his brothers were born on Sunday (1-45).

¹⁴ KR, 1-5-109 and 110.

Since these two stanzas are not found in some manuscripts of KR, it is believed that they might be later additions. This appears to be true.

¹⁵ Ibid, 1-5-118.

¹⁶ RR, pp. 20-21.

introduced this story to suggest that Manthara who later sabotages the coronation ceremony of Rama nurses a grievance against Rama even from his childhood.

The episode of Ahalya

The episode of Ahalya is one of the most important incidents in the Ramayana. Rama is generally called *patita pavana* meaning the emancipator of the fallen. May be, he is so called quite appropriately because of his emancipation of Ahalya, the wife of the sage Gautama. A. N. Krishna Aiyangar says that this important episode is omitted in the *Agnipurana*.¹⁷

According to RR, Indra wants to disturb Gautama when he comes to know of the sage's terrible penance. Then one day, he takes the form of a cock and crows near the sage's hut. On hearing it, the sage hurries up for his morning rites. When he has left the hut, Indra disguises as Gautama and approaches the beautiful Ahalya to slake his lust. Even after knowing that the disguised person is no other than Indra, she takes him into her hut. After a while, the sage returns when Indra is about to leave the place. Enraged at this act, Gautama curses him to become castrated. Immediately the curse comes true. Afterwards, the sage turns to his wife and curses her also to become a boulder and suffer in the hot sun, wind and dust, and be unnoticed. When she prays for salvation, Gautama says that she will be released from the curse when Rama places his foot on her. So saying, he retires to the Himalayas.

On his way to Mithila, Rama comes to the place where Ahalya has been lying as a stone. When his feet touch it, the stone is transformed into a sweet woman. Now, Ahalya shines like burnished gold, the crystal-clear tank, the fire free from smoke, and the moon relieved from the clouds. Meanwhile Gautama goes over there, worships Rama and takes back his wife with him.¹⁸

The above version is close to the original. But a few changes are noticeable. The detail that Indra assumes the form of a cock is, not found in VR. The most important change is that Ahalya becomes a stone in the Telugu version while in the original she

¹⁷ 'Agnipurana and the Ramayana,' *Bharatiya Vidyā*, Vol. XXV, 1965 pp. 9-17.

¹⁸ RR, pp. 50-51.

was cursed to lie as a heap of ashes for several thousands of years and unseen by anybody.

Kamban also has made a few changes, though on the whole he is faithful to the original. Before narrating the episode of Ahalya, he tells the story of Durvasa, a sage who curses Indra for his misbehaviour.¹⁹ As a result of this, the riches of Indra disappear from the *Devaloka* and fall into the milky ocean. Then as advised by Lord Vishnu, the gods begin to churn the ocean of milk. The story of churning the milky ocean is found both in BR and RR, but not the story of the sage Durvasa.

Kamban may have given this story to facilitate his reader to have a glimpse of Indra's character even before reading the story of Ahalya whose fair name is besmirched by Indra. So, the inclusion of this episode seems to be artistically justifiable.

While narrating the story of Ahalya, Kamban has given a few details which are not found in RR and VR. After fulfilling his evil desire with Ahalya, Indra is about to leave the place assuming a cat's form. Then the sage Gautama appears. Enraged at his act, he curses him so that his entire body is filled with a thousand *yonis* (a woman's reproductive organ).²⁰ Immediately, Gautama's words become true. Afterwards, the sage relents and converts them into a thousand eyes, as desired by Brahma and the other gods. Thus Indra is punished.

Gautama has not excused his wife. Since she behaves like a courtesan, the sage curses her to become a black stone. Here Kamban uses the term *vilaimagal*²¹ meaning *vesya* for Ahalya. After her emancipation, Rama kneels down and advises her to forget what has happened.²² Rama does not stop at that. Accompanied by the sage Visvamitra and Lakshmana, Rama goes to the place where Gautama is staying and requests him to accept Ahalya as wife.²³

Though Valmiki does not say that Ahalya, after her husband's curse becomes a stone, this detail has found a permanent place in

¹⁹ KR, 1-9-17 and 18.

²⁰ Ibid, 1-9-78.

²¹ Ibid, 1-9-79.

²² Ibid, 1-9-83.

This verse is given in the Murray & Co. edition with a different text indicating that Ahalya bowed to the feet of Rama (1-9-25).

²³ Ibid, 1-9-85.

the Telugu and Tamil versions of the Ramayana story. S. Shankar Raju states that this is mentioned in *Raghuvamsa* and other works.²⁴

The premarital love of Sita and Rama

Now, the place of action moves to Mithila.

KR describes vividly the premarital love of Sita and Rama which is not found in RR or VR.

Accompanied by Visvamitra, Rama and Lakshmana enter the city of Mithila. After passing through several streets and witnessing different street scenes, finally they reach the palace of Janaka. Then Rama happens to see Sita on the balcony of her palace. She too looks at him. Kamban takes this opportunity to say that Sita and Rama are Lakshmi and Vishnu. Now that they meet each other after separation, their love for each other is indescribable.²⁵ In fact, Kamban describes in about forty stanzas the pangs of love experienced by Sita.

The charm of Sita captivates the heart of Rama. He too feels the urgency of his love for Sita. Since his heart goes after her, he concludes that she should be a virgin.²⁶

Afterwards, Rama and Lakshmana along with Visvamitra reach the place where the king Janaka is performing a *yaga*. As directed by him, the Bow of Siva is brought there by five thousand sturdy men. Rama approaches the Bow. Here Kamban says that those present there could only see Rama lifting the bow and hear its breaking sound. Then Janaka announces his decision that he would give his daughter, Sita, in marriage to Rama. Immediately, messengers are despatched to Dasaratha to convey this happy news to him. Then Dasaratha and his men start for Mithila. Perhaps, to satisfy the requisites of a poem, Kamban takes this opportunity to describe several things. 'The journey of Dasaratha to Mithila', says V. V. S. Aiyar, 'which Valmiki describes in but one or two *shlokas* is elaborately described by Kamban in four *patalas* which take up about 300 stanzas. This is a great deal too much'.²⁷

²⁴ *A Comparative Study of Kamba Ramayanam and Tulasi Ramayan*, 1971, p. 126.

²⁵ KR, 1-10-38.

²⁶ KR, 1-10-147. This reminds us the memorable *stoka* of Kalidasa's *Abhijnana Sakuntala* 'asamsayam kshatraparigrahakshama.....' (*The Abhijnana Sakuntala*, pub. Sahitya Akademi, 1965, p. 15).

²⁷ *Kamba Ramayanam — A study*, p. 34.

Janaka stands before Rama and pouring water (sanctified by the *mantras*) in his right hand says, 'O Rama, live with my beautiful daughter Sita like Lakshmi and Vishnu'.²⁸ While *mantras* are being chanted, Rama takes Sita by hand in the presence of the holy fire. Then Rama along with Sita prostrates before the elders including his mothers. First he pays his deep respects to Kaikeyi and then to Kausalya and Sumitra respectively.²⁹ It can be seen from this that Kamban's Rama has more regard for Kaikeyi than for his own mother.

According to T. P. Meenakshisundaran and other Tamil scholars, the premarital love of Sita and Rama as described by Kamban is a Tamil tradition and that it belongs to the Sangam age.³⁰

Tulasidas, the celebrated Hindi poet in his famous poem entitled *Ramcharitamanas*, also refers to the pre-marital love of Rama and Sita.³¹ But Tulasi's Rama meets Sita in a garden. Vimalasuri's *Paumachariyam* (the Jain version of the Ramayana) mentions the initial betrothal of Sita to Rama and this is mentioned in the *Padmapurana* possibly influenced by the tradition of *Paumachariyam*.³² Further, the ancient custom among the *kshatriya* families is *svayamvara* in which the princess is given freedom to select her fiancé. Such being the case, it may be said that the pre-marital love is an ancient custom prevailing among the royal families. But since this has not found place in Valmiki but only in the Sangam classics in Tamil, it may be said that this is an approved tradition in the Sangam age to which Kamban confirms in his version of the Ramayana story.

However though Kamban's Rama sees and loves Sita even before marriage, his marriage takes place according to the Vedic rites. That is, Rama takes Sita by hand (*panigrahana*) but there is no reference to *tali* (mangalya). The tying of the tali, according to the Dravidian traditions, is an important act of the marriage rite. 'This is a pure Tamil custom, absolutely unknown to the

²⁸ KR, 1-21-87.

²⁹ KR, 1-21-95.

³⁰ *A History of Tamil Literature*, p. 110.

³¹ Peraraju, Notalapati., *Tulasi Ramayanam* (Translation in Telugu, 1965), pp. 65-67.

³² K.R. Chandra, 'Extent of the influence of the Rama story of *Paumachariyam*' *Journal of the Oriental Institute*, M. S. University of Baroda, March-June, 1966, pp. 341-349.

Grihya Sūtras, which consider *panigrahanam*, the taking of the hand and the *saptapadi*, the taking of the seven steps as the vital act of the sacrament of the marriage'.³³ Thus we find in KR a happy assimilation of the Aryan and non-Aryan customs.

True to the original, RR and other Telugu versions do not describe the premarital love of Sita and Rama. During the breaking of the Bow, Rama is stated to have said to Janaka that the Bow was very old, very light and very fragile; still he (Janaka) praised it in several words.³⁴ This particular utterance on the part of Rama at that time does not sound appropriate. Unlike KR, RR is very brief in its descriptions and hence they do not interrupt the story. The journey of Dasaratha to Mithila is described in about twenty lines. The marriage of Sita is described in such a manner that it looks like a Telugu wedding. The description of Sita and Rama when they saw each other during the marriage is really poetic and beautiful.³⁵

'As the appointed *muhurta* (auspicious time) was fast approaching, the veil (usually, a long piece of cloth or a shawl) was lifted. Then Rama looked at Sita and was very much pleased. His eyes looked like lotuses which derive pleasure at the sight of the full moon. The looks of Sita were centred on the feet of Rama like the bees on the lotus. His looks were like fishes in the ocean of her beauty. Her looks were like the petals of a lotus in the current of Rama's bodily lustre. As they were looking at each other, they forgot themselves for a while.'

Bharata and Satrughna

After subduing the pride of Parasurama, Rama and others return to Ayodhya. The city gives them a warm welcome. Some days pass. It is stated in VR that Bharata and Satrughna are sent to Girivrajapura, as desired by their maternal uncle. After their departure, Rama and Lakshmana serve their father to his entire satisfaction. At the instance of the king, Rama looks after the welfare of the subjects of Ayodhya. Every one is immensely pleased with his tactful diplomacy. Though Rama is engrossed in governmental affairs, still his heart is always Sita-centred. She too loves him deeply. Rama lives like Lord Vishnu

³³ *History of the Tamils*, p. 57.

³⁴ RR, p. 65.

³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 75.

with his everloving and sweet wife, Sita. Thus ends the Bala Kanda in VR.

RR closely follows VR in all its details. Still there are one or two divergencies. The poet compares Dasaratha with his four sons to Lord Vishnu having four hands and to the celestial elephant *Airavata* with four tusks.

While sending Bharata and Satrugna to their uncle's house, Dasaratha asks them to learn different branches of learning, including the *Vedas*, *sastras*, archery etc.³⁶ Accordingly, they study under great masters. After completing the studies, Bharata sends through a Brahman a letter to Dasaratha expressing their desire to see him.³⁷

It can be seen from the above that Bharata and Satrugna are sent to their maternal uncle's house for a definite purpose, namely, that they should get themselves trained in different branches of learning.

Kamban too follows the original closely. Before leaving Ayodhya for his uncle's house, Bharata comes to Rama and pays his respects to him. Here Kamban employs a beautiful simile in order to signify the relationship between Bharata and Rama as something indescribable.³⁸ Bharata taking leave of Rama, is like a body departing from life.³⁹ Rama is referred to as life and Bharata the body. In other words, Bharata and Rama are inseparable; but the former has to leave the latter since the order comes from his father.

In other Kandas too, some differences are noticeable.

AYODHYA KANDA

The story in the second canto, *Ayodhya Kanda*, marches quickly. It reads like a powerful drama with several characters and moving incidents. It is, therefore, generally regarded as a 'superb piece of work'.⁴⁰ 'According to the best critics of Tamil literature', says C. Rajagopalachari, 'it is also the finest part of Kamban's great classic'.⁴⁰

³⁶ RR, p. 81.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 82.

³⁸ KR, 1-22-48.

³⁹ *Kamba Ramayanam — A Study*, p. 34.

⁴⁰ *The Ramayana as told by Kamban (The Ayodhya Canto)*, (New Delhi, Sahitya Akademi), preface, p. 7.

Enmity of Manthara with Rama

It is a well-known fact that Manthara, the servant maid of Kaikeyi, instigates her mistress to remind the king of the two boons which Dasaratha had given her during the war between the gods and the demons. One of the boons is that Rama should go to the forests. We understand from VR that everyone in Ayodhya is much pleased to hear that Rama would be installed as king. Even Kaikeyi is happy to hear this. It is only the hump-backed Manthara that reacts in a hostile way. But Valmiki does not say why she alone is unhappy. He only says she is *papa darsini* (of evil intent). But as already mentioned, RR gives us a story in which it is said that Rama had fractured the leg of Manthara with the stick he was playing with.⁴¹ Now she has got an opportunity to wreak her vengeance on Rama.

KR also gives a reason for the enmical reaction of Manthara; but this is slightly different from the account as given above in RR.

KR says that Rama, as a boy, had shot mud balls against the hunch of Manthara.⁴² Now that she has got a chance to take vengeance on Rama, she wants to poison the ears of her mistress and she finally succeeds.

Departure of Rama from Ayodhya

KR differs with RR and the original in regard to the departure of Rama from Ayodhya. On behalf of Dasaratha, Kaikeyi sends for Rama and announces the banishment of Rama and the installation of Bharata as king. On hearing this, Rama does not become unhappy. On the contrary, he keeps cheerful and bows at her feet. As the king is lying in an unconscious state, he salutes in the direction of the king.⁴³ Rama does not even see the king. Then he goes to his apartment and gets himself ready to leave the place. Before leaving, he requests his mothers to look after the king. Hence, it may be said that Dasaratha and Rama have not met or seen each other before the latter's departure to the forest.

Following the original, it is stated in RR that Rama has met, his father before leaving Ayodhya. Rama consoles Dasaratha

⁴¹ RR, p. 89.

⁴² KR, 2-2-41.

⁴³ Ibid, 2-4-1.

that he would spend the fourteen years like fourteen days and return home. But he requests his father to treat his mother, Kausalya, with tender feelings.

Sumantra who escorts Rama, Sita and Lakshmana out to the forest returns to report to the grief-stricken Dasaratha all that has happened at the forest. The king can not bear the sorrow any further. He even curses himself. Kausalya taunts him with harsh words. Then Dasaratha tells her the story of a boy whom he had killed unknowingly and the curse given by the boy's father. RR is faithful to the original in narrating all the above incidents. But in the original the name of that unfortunate lad is not given. He is merely referred to as the 'son of a sage.' In RR his name is given as Yajnadatta.⁴⁴ But KR gives his name as Surochana.⁴⁵ Further, he is stated to be a Brahmin boy whereas in the original and RR he is described as a boy born to a *Vaisya* father and a *Sudra* mother. And this story is narrated in KR long before Rama, Sita and Lakshmana leave Ayodhya. In the original and RR, Dasaratha dies soon after telling this story while in KR he dies after learning that Rama had reached the forest.⁴⁶

The episode of the crow

Even before describing the death of Dasaratha, RR gives the story of a wicked crow (Kakasura) which takes place on the mountain of Chitrakuta. It is repeated in the Sundara Kanda (Canto V) also. Thus, the story of Kakasura is found in two places in RR. But in the original it is found only in the Sundara-Kanda. Kamban also gives it only in the Sundara Kanda.

According to KR and the original the crow who approaches Sita is no other than Jayanta, the son of Indra. But in RR, it is mentioned as merely a wicked crow.⁴⁷

Cremation of Dasaratha

Regarding the cremation of Dasaratha also, KR gives a different version from that of RR. In RR, as advised by Vasishtha,

⁴⁴ RR, p. 124.

⁴⁵ KR, 2-4-79.

(This verse is regarded by some scholars as a later addition)

⁴⁶ Ibid, 2-5-60.

⁴⁷ RR, p. 122.

Bharata performs the funeral rites,⁴⁸ while they were performed by Satrugna in KR.⁴⁹ KR says that Bharata is prevented from performing the rites since Dasaratha has disowned him. Thus Kamban's Dasaratha is not happy even with Bharata, since he happens to be the son of Kaikeyi. This is a clear indication of the king's hatred for her.

Meeting of Rama and Guha

The meeting of Rama and Guha is one of the interesting episodes in the Ramayana. According to RR, Guha is a tribal king (*Chenchu raju*) of Sringeribera.⁵⁰ Valmiki says that he is the best friend of Rama. RR does not say this. But from the manner in which Guha has been treated in RR, it may be said that they are known to each other. On learning of Rama's arrival on the bank of the Ganges, Guha approaches Rama with vegetables, fruits and other articles as presents. After seeing him in a hermit's dress, Guha asks the reason for the change and vows to kill those who are responsible for his present predicament. Rama is pleased with his words and embraces him affectionately and tells him all that has happened.

That night, Sita and Rama sleep on a bed of grass while Lakshmana stands at a distance as a watchful guard. He takes a vow that he would guard his brother both day and night throughout the exile of fourteen years. Then the Goddess of sleep (*nidra devi*) approaches Lakshmana and says that she has been asked to follow him closely and hence questions how she could leave him. Then he asks her to stay with his wife Urmila till the exile is over. The Goddess of sleep agrees to this and goes away. This incident is not found in the original.

Afterwards, Rama, Sita and Lakshmana cross the Ganges by the boat, arranged by Guha who is of great assistance to them. It is worth noting that Guha is depicted in RR as a sincere devotee of Rama.

KR depicts Guha in brighter colours. He is said to be a Chieftain of boatmen possessing one thousand boats. On hearing of the arrival of Rama, he goes and stands at the gate of the hermitage where Rama stays and announces in a loud voice that

⁴⁸ RR, p. 133.

⁴⁹ KR, 2-9-139.

⁵⁰ RR, p. 118.

he is eagerly waiting for the master's orders. Then Lakshmana takes him in. Guha offers with love honey and fish to Rama who accepts them with a smile.

Guha comes to know the story of Rama through Lakshmana and he feels sorry for them. The poet says that Lakshmana does not sleep that night and that he asks the Goddess of sleep to visit him after his return to Ayodhya.⁵¹

It is significant here that KR does not refer to Urmila as we find in the Telugu version.

The next morning, Rama asks Guha to arrange a boat for them to cross the Ganges. With tears welling up in his eyes, Guha requests him to stay with him. He assures that he would provide them with all comforts. Rama smilingly replies that he would comply with his request on his return journey.

Then a big boat is brought. Guha himself rows the boat. Rama is moved by the affection and devotion shown by Guha. He tells him that they were four brothers at Ayodhya; but now they have become five. Thus, Guha is depicted in KR as a brother to Rama.⁵²

Finally, to sum up, Valmiki describes Guha as a friend of Rama while the Telugu and Tamil poets describe him as a devotee and a brother to Rama respectively.

Meeting of Guha and Bharata

The meeting of Bharata and Guha is also interesting. Following the original, it is stated in both RR and KR that Guha first mistakes Bharata as if he is chasing Rama. He, therefore, gets very angry with him. In RR, Guha is said to have approached Bharata along with his army and says: 'O! Bharata! Is it fair on your part to go against Rama who has given up the kingdom for you and who is now an ascetic in the forests? I am his servant. I shall destroy your army. After I lose my life in the fight with you, you can attack Rama.' Then Bharata replies thus: 'I am going to Rama, who is a *paramatma* (supreme) to request him to return to Ayodhya and I shall crown him. I have no evil intention at all.' Guha is now softened. He knows the mind of Bharata and bows at his feet. Afterwards, Guha and Bharata become friends.⁵³

⁵¹ KR, 2-6-51.

⁵² Ibid, 2-6-74.

⁵³ RR, p. 134

Kamban's Guha too is not happy with Bharata at first. He is also determined to fight with him if that becomes necessary. It is interesting to note that the Guhas in Telugu and Tamil versions think alike in the beginning. But Kamban's Guha appears to be somewhat cautious in his actions. He, therefore, tells his men that he would first go to Bharata to know his mind. Meanwhile, Sumantra who sees Guha talking to his men tells Bharata about the great qualities of Guha. Then Bharata himself wants to meet Guha.

After knowing the mind of Bharata, Guha in KR is a completely changed man. Not only does he prostrate before him, but also praises Bharata in the following words: 'As desired by your mother, your father gave you the kingdom. But you have not accepted it and instead desire to bring back your brother and install him on the throne. Can a thousand Ramas equal you in character?' ⁵⁴

It can be said that KR is closer to the original than RR in narrating this incident.

Rama presents the wooden sandals

Bharata meets Rama and requests him to return to Ayodhya. Then a long discussion pregnant with philosophical truths follows. Both are strong in their arguments. They can not come to any conclusion. According to Valmiki, then some *Devarishis* and *Siddhas*, who have been watching the deliberations secretly, interfere in the matter. They advise Bharata to follow the words of Rama. Dasaratha has attained heaven since he had fulfilled his word given to Kaikeyi. They warn that if the two boons granted to her by him are not properly fulfilled by the sons, then Dasaratha may lose his place in the heaven.

Thus Valmiki has brought about a happy compromise between the brothers.

In KR, this particular incident is narrated with a slight variation.

On hearing Bharata's announcement that he would also stay along with Rama in the forests, the gods think that Rama might go back to Ayodhya which results in their frustration. So they suggest that Rama should stay in the forest for fourteen years and

⁵⁴ KR, 2-11-35.

that Bharata should rule the kingdom, as suggested by their father. Thus in KR, the voice of the gods from heaven decide the matter.⁵⁵

RR deals with the above incident briefly, without sacrificing the spirit of the original. Rama, in his final argument, appeals to Bharata to follow the words of their father. If Bharata does not obey his father, who else will do? Further, he says as is the king so are the subjects. So, he urges Bharata to go back to Ayodhya and rule the kingdom.⁵⁶

On hearing this, the sages present there, and the gods above heave a sigh of relief and conclude that Ravana would be killed. They also exhort Bharata to obey Rama.

Afterwards, it is agreed that Bharata would rule on behalf of the sandals (*paduka*) of Rama. In KR, it is stated that Bharata carries the sandals on his head⁵⁷ while RR and VR mention that they are placed on the royal elephant, *sairunjayam*.⁵⁸ True to the original, the second canto in KR ends with the detail that Rama, Sita and Lakshmana leave for the Dandaka forest, while this is mentioned in RR at the beginning of the third canto, namely, the Aranya Kanda.

ARANYA KANDA

In RR and KR, the story of the *Aranya Kanda* (the forest canto) begins with the meeting of Rama and the Atris. This is somewhat elaborately narrated in VR. There is an interesting discussion between Sita and Anasuya, the wife of Atri. During the discussion, Sita narrates the story of her marriage. She discloses to Anasuya that her marriage had been fixed only after Dasaratha's consent was obtained. This and other interesting details are missing in both RR and KR.

Agastya

Then Rama visits the hermitage of the sage Agastya. It is only in KR it is stated that the sage is a scholar in Tamil.⁵⁹ KR

⁵⁵ KR, 2-12-191.

⁵⁶ RR, p. 142.

⁵⁷ KR, 2-12-139.

⁵⁸ RR, p. 143.

⁵⁹ KR, 3-3-96.

further mentions that he gives Rama a bow belonging to Lord Vishnu and a set of arrows including a powerful missile that was used by Siva to destroy Tripura⁶⁰ while RR and the original merely state that he gives him divine arrows. As suggested by the sage, Rama sets forth to Panchavati situated on the banks of the Godavari. On the way, Rama meets Jatayu, a great bird and a friend of Dasaratha. Their meeting is vividly described by Kamban, while in RR it is very brief (14 lines).⁶¹ According to KR, Jatayu is immensely pleased to hear the name of Dasaratha and is shocked at his death. The bird requests Rama and Lakshmana to perform cremational rites for him, since he and their father share the same life. Naturally Rama views Jatayu as his father. Then Rama moves to Chitrakuta.

The episode of Jambukumara

According to Valmiki, one day, by chance, a demoness by name Surpanakha comes to the hermitage of Rama. Kamban follows the original closely. But according to RR, it is not by chance, but deliberately that Surpanakha, the sister of Ravana, comes to Rama. The Telugu poet has narrated an interesting story in this connection which is not found either in the original or in KR.⁶²

One day, after paying his respects to his brother, Lakshmana goes to the forest to collect fruits, tubers, etc. When he wanders about, at a certain place, he finds to his great surprise, a sword hanging in the air. He also hears a strange voice saying thus: 'O! the son of the king of demons! receive this sword. Pleased at your penance, the Sun God has sent it.' Lakshmana then hears a reply: 'I shall not accept this since He has not personally presented it to me.' As the sword remains still unclaimed by anyone, Lakshmana takes it and cuts with it a bush of bamboo sticks. Soon he notices a sage beheaded and fallen on the ground. Lakshmana is overcome with grief for killing a sage and immediately

⁶⁰ KR, 3-3-55 and 56.

⁶¹ RR, p. 153.

⁶² A word about the episode of Jambukumara. Though this is not found in VR and KR, it is narrated in the *Ananda Ramayana* and the *Torave Ramayana* in Kannada. But in the *Ananda Ramayana*, Jambukumara is mentioned as Samba. Brahma (not the Sun god) is said to have given him a sword. It is significant that the versions of this episode found in RR and *Ananda Ramayana* are different.

reports the matter to Rama who begins to ponder over it. Meanwhile, the sages of the place come to Rama and say as follows:

‘Your brother has done a good thing by killing Jambukumara, the son of Surpanakha and the nephew of Ravana. Once, Ravana led an expedition against several kings. As he had no confidence in anyone, he asked Vidyujjihva, the husband of his sister (Surpanakha) to look after his kingdom in his absence, and went away. After some time, Vidyujjihva became so greedy for the kingdom that he wanted to learn all the tricks (*mayas*) first. And he put his desire into action. The victorious Ravana came to know of his mind soon after his return to Lanka. He grew so wild that he had no compassion even for his brother-in-law and beheaded him. Then, Surpanakha was pregnant. Ravana consoled her saying that she could freely move and choose any person whom she liked as her husband.

Later Surpanakha got a son by name Jambukumara. On learning of his father’s death, Jambukumara became furious and wanted to wreak his vengeance upon the killer of his father. So, he began to do penance for the Sun God who was pleased with it and had sent him a sword; but Jambukumara would not receive it.’

Surpanakha sees her son killed. She also comes to know the details of the person who has killed him. So she comes to Rama.

Though this story is not narrated in Valmiki’s poem, this has found a place in the Telugu versions — RR and BR. Since this gives details about Surpanakha and her anger against Rama and Lakshmana, the Telugu poets, perhaps, may have given the story with a definite purpose and hence this deviation is justifiable.

The description of Surpanakha’s approaching Rama is poetic. She looks like poison that has taken the form of a woman; like a great *bhuta* (evil spirit) which wants to eat away all the worlds; and like the very death (*mrityu*) which appears on the earth indicating the end of the demons.

Surpanakha

Though Surpanakha approaches Rama in great anger, she becomes very soft after seeing his fine person. She falls in love with him and expresses her desire to Rama. Finally, she grows wild and threatens to devour Sita. Rama then orders Lakshmana to punish her suitably. When the demouess approaches Lakshmana, he cut off her ears and nose.

In KR also, the story of Surpanakha is dealt with fairly elaborately. But no mention is made of Jambukumara. Still, we find some other deviations.

In KR, Surpanakha approaches Rama not in her original form but in a maid's comely form.⁶³ Her name is Kamavalli. When she expresses her desire to Rama, he says that a lady belonging to the Brahmin caste should not marry a man of the Kshatriya clan. There are some further arguments on both sides. Meanwhile, Sita comes there. On seeing her fine appearance, Surpanakha concludes that Rama would not marry her so long as she (Sita) is with him. The next morning, Rama as usual goes to the river for performing his morning rites. The demoness thinks that it is the best opportunity for her to seize Sita and keep her in a secret place and hence approaches the lonely Sita. She does not notice Lakshmana who is patrolling the place. As she is nearing Sita, Lakshmana sees her and seizes her by her hair. Afterwards he cuts off her breast besides nose and ears.⁶⁴ When Rama returns from the river, Surpanakha makes another unsuccessful attempt to win his love.⁶⁵

While reporting to Ravana about her disfigurement by Lakshmana, Surpanakha tells him that she has wanted to bring Sita, the paragon of beauty, to his presence but could not. Thus Kamban narrates the story of Surpanakha.

Abduction of Sita

On hearing from Surpanakha about the peerless beauty of Sita, Ravana becomes impatient and desires to possess her. At his instance, Maricha an adept in various tricks of magic and deceit, transforms himself into a golden deer and moves about near the hermitage of Rama. Though Lakshmana tries to dissuade Rama from going after the animal, the latter sets out to bring it as urged by Sita. The deer draws him far away from the hermitage and finally Rama is compelled to use his powerful *Brahmastra* (missile). According to Valmiki, then Maricha dies crying out mimicking the voice of Rama, 'Ah! Sita and Ah! Lakshmana.' But in RR and KR the name of Sita is omitted.

⁶³ KR, 3-5-31.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 3-5-94.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 3-5-134.

After hearing what seems to be Rama's lamentation in agony, Sita becomes anxious and asks Lakshmana to immediately investigate it. But the original and RR, at this point, describe Sita as a woman who has lost control on herself. It is no wonder therefore that she accuses Lakshmana in several harsh terms. In KR also, Sita is not happy at the behaviour of Lakshmana. But she does not use such a harsh language as found in RR. According to KR, she says that she would prefer death by falling in flames and soon sets out to search for a fire.⁶⁶ Then Lakshmana prevents her from such a course of action, assuring that he is at once leaving the place in search of his brother. Then he remembers the great bird, Jatayu. Lakshmana hopes that the bird would come to Sita's rescue if anything happened.

In RR, Sita tells Lakshmana that she would face death by falling into the river Godavari, unless he obeys her. Before leaving the hermitage, Lakshmana draws seven lines around it and warns her not to go beyond them. He further says that if anyone tries to enter the hut crossing those lines, his head would break into several pieces the next moment. Then he leaves the place.⁶⁷

The above detail, as found in RR, is not narrated in VR and KR.

After Lakshmana has left the hermitage, Ravana in the guise of a mendicant approaches Sita. Kamban's Ravana comes chanting the *Vedas* in a musical tone resembling that of *vina*.⁶⁸ He has a triple staff in his hand. RR also has a graphic description of the hermit Ravana. He chants some *mantras* and utters the words 'Hari, Hari' now and then.⁶⁹ The initial dialogue between Sita and Ravana appears to be more or less alike in both KR and RR. On learning that the mendicant is no other than Ravana, Sita begins to tremble. Still, she advises him to go back to his place. But when Ravana shows her his real form, it is stated in RR that Sita loses her courage and faints. Then the wicked Ravana lifts her up and places her in his chariot. The poet aptly describes Ravana's taking away Sita with him as carrying the goddess of death (*mrityu devata*) with himself.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ KR, 3-8-13.

⁶⁷ RR, p. 177.

⁶⁸ KR, 3-8-21.

⁶⁹ RR, p. 178.

⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 179.

In KR, Sita even after seeing the real form of Ravana, tells him that he is no equal at all to Rama. Then Ravana implores her to save him as he is madly in love with her and pining for her response. He does not stop at that. He falls at her feet.⁷¹ Sita, unable to bear this, cries out to Lakshmana and Rama. Ravana then wants to abduct her. But he avoids touching her since he is reminded of an earlier curse by which his head would be broken to pieces if he approaches any lady without her consent. So, he uproots the very cottage in which she lives and puts it on his chariot and flies to Lanka.⁷²

Dropping of ornaments

Jatayu fights to death with Ravana in order to rescue Sita from his clutches. Ravana proceeds to Lanka with her in the air. On the way, she sees five monkeys on the top of a mountain (Risyamuka). In VR, it is stated that Sita drops her upper garment and some auspicious ornaments in their midst in the hope that they might inform Rama of her plight.

RR gives a different version.

While Sita is carried away by Ravana, her anklet falls down owing to the speed of Ravana's flight. Her neck ornaments also become loose and fall down. While flying over the Risyamuka mountain, she sees five sturdy monkeys. Then she tears a part of her cloth (sari) and ties in it her ornaments and drops the bunch in their midst in the hope that they might inform Rama. As she expects, it is noticed by the monkeys.⁷³

But Valmiki refers to the anklet and other auspicious ornaments dropped by Sita only in the Kishkindha Kanda; when Lakshmana is asked to examine them, he replies in the following memorable *sloka*:

‘Naham janami Keyure na cha pasyami kundale
Nupuretvabhijanami nityam padabhivandanat.’

(I cannot identify her bracelets nor have I seen her ear-ornaments. But I can recognise her anklets as I have constantly saluted at her feet).

Following the original, RR again refers to the ornaments of

⁷¹ KR, 3-8-72.

⁷² Ibid, 3-8-75.

⁷³ RR, 183.

Sita in the Kishkindha Kanda. On looking at them, Rama plunges into deep sorrow. Then he cleans them with his tears and tells Lakshmana that the ornaments of Sita have gathered dust. But the reply of Lakshmana as stated in the above *sloka* is not found.

In KR, we find a reference to the ornaments in the Kishkindha Kanda only.⁷⁴ The sorrow of Rama is described at length; but nothing is mentioned about Lakshmana.

The death of Jatayu

The death of Jatayu is a moving story in the Ramayana. Both KR and RR have stated that Jatayu has put up a strong fight against Ravana. According to Kamban, the banner of Ravana has an emblem of *vina*.⁷⁵ The other details are almost the same as found in the original.

In RR, Rama and Lakshmana are said to have grieved more for the loss of Jatayu than for their own father's death. But on seeing the wounded Jatayu, Rama at first mistakes him for some cruel *rakshasa* who has devoured his wife and then has assumed the form of a bird. As his mind is full of thoughts on Sita, he wants to kill him even. Then the bird refers to their first meeting when he has told Rama that he is the best friend of Dasaratha. Hence it appears somewhat strange that Rama and Lakshmana have forgotten him completely and fail to recognize him later.

The episode of Ayomukhi

Sandwiched between the account of the death of Jatayu and the story of Kabandha, is an episode in KR which is found in VR but not in RR. It is as follows.⁷⁶

One evening, Rama and Lakshmana are still grief-stricken as further details about Sita are not known. For that night they desire to stay in a nearby garden. Meanwhile, Rama becomes thirsty. So Lakshmana sets forth to bring some water; but he fails to get it though he goes a long way. He is wandering here and there. Then a demoness by name Ayomukhi who happens to see him falls in deep love with him. She expresses her desire to him which he does not reciprocate. Then, she thinks of

⁷⁴ KR, 4-6-3.

⁷⁵ Ibid 3-8-107.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 3-9-1 to 101; V.R.; Aranya Kanda, 69th sarga.

carrying him away and remanding him to her care for some days so that he would agree to her request after some time. So she takes the form of a cloud and begins to fly along with him.

As Lakshmana does not turn up for a long time, Rama becomes anxious and thinks that something may have happened to him. He is so vexed with the situation that he wants to commit suicide. Meanwhile, Lakshmana with his sword cuts off the ears and nose of Ayomukhi. Owing to the unbearable pain, she leaves him and goes away crying. On hearing the whimper Rama gives up his idea and concludes that some demon may have attacked Lakshmana. After a while, he sees to his great pleasure, his brother returning with water.

Sabari

The Aranya Kanda in KR ends with the episode of Sabari, a female devotee of Rama. Expecting the arrival of Rama at her cottage, she collects some delicious fruits and offers them to Rama after she is satisfied with their taste.⁷⁷ Rama accepts them with love.

RR also narrates the above account. But it merely states that she offers some fruits to Rama which he accepts. In this connection, it may be said that whenever a reference is made to Sabari, the Telugus generally remember her as a great devotee who has offered to Rama the fruits first tasted by her.

Tyagaraja, in his well-known song *Entani ne varnintunu* extols the greatness of Sabari. The following is the English rendering of the song.

‘How can I adequately describe the rare fortune and merit that Sabari had, while scores of the great wives of the sages in the world had them not. She was privileged to see the Lord directly to her heart’s content, offer Him delicious fruits, prostrate before His holy feet with body in thrill and attain freedom from rebirth in the presence of the Lord Himself.’⁷⁸

⁷⁷ KR, 3-11-5.

(This verse is said to be found in only a few manuscripts.)

⁷⁸ The rendering has been done by C. Ramanujachari; *The Spiritual Heritage of Tyagaraja*, p. 155.

KISHKINDHA KANDA

Tara

Tara, the wife of Vali, is one of the major women characters in the Ramayana. Her story is narrated in KR and RR in the Kishkindha Kanda (Fourth canto).

After killing Vali, Rama installs his brother Sugriva as king of the monkeys. Then comes the rainy season. Since it is not a propitious period for fighting, it is decided to continue endeavours towards the search for Sita in the month of *Kartika*. So according to KR, Rama retires to a certain place on the Risyamuka mountain (Malyavantam in RR and Prasravana in VR) while Sugriva goes to the Kishkindha.

The rainy season is over and is followed by the autumn. But Sugriva does not turn up as promised before and so Rama becomes impatient. Lakshmana is, therefore, asked to investigate the exact position.

Accordingly, Lakshmana goes to the Kishkindha. The monkeys, frightened at his very sight, immediately rush to the prince Angada and inform him of his coming. Angada too sees Lakshmana from a distance and soon goes to Sugriva to inform him of the same. At the time, Sugriva is drunk and some women are at his service. Though Angada informs him of the visit of the furious Lakshmana, the king could not reply to him as he is still under the influence of drink. Then, accompanied by Hanuman and others, Angada approaches his mother, Tara, and informs her of the state of Sugriva and of Lakshmana.

Tara then addresses her son and Hanuman in the following words: 'You promised before Rama that you would call on him with your armies in the month of *Kartika*. But you have neither kept your word nor remembered the help he has done. You have, therefore, become ungrateful to Rama, who deprived of his wife, is undergoing deep sorrow. Is it fair on your part to indulge yourselves in pleasures while Rama is suffering? If you incur his displeasure, the monkey-world would be destroyed.'

Thus Kamban's Tara speaks to Hanuman and Angada. Meanwhile, Lakshmana has been approaching the palace fast and furious. Tara, accompanied by a few women, appears before him. On seeing the women before him, Lakshmana becomes very shy and soft and lowers his head. Then Tara

says: 'Sir! we are to-day fortunate and our place has been sanctified on account of your arrival here. Is it not unusual to-day that you should leave Rama alone and come here? May we know the reason of your arrival? Seeing your fierce mood, we the monkeys are very much frightened.' After hearing the sweet and gentle words, Lakshmana wants to know who she is. As he sees her, he becomes grief-stricken. Tara is clad in spotless white clothes. She has no auspicious ornaments like *mangalya* and the like. Neither has she had the *kurukum* on her forehead. Looking at her in the widow's weeds, Lakshmana is at once reminded of his mother and so his heart is filled with sorrow.⁷⁹ After a while, he tells her the reason of his arrival. But Tara pacifies him by saying that Sugriva would soon call on Rama with his armies.

Then, Hanuman arrives on the scene. When Lakshmana asks him whether he too has forgotten his duty, Hanuman replies that an ungrateful man will never flourish and that Sugriva has been engaged in collecting all the armies. Lakshmana is satisfied with his words.

Afterwards, accompanied by Hanuman, Lakshmana goes to Sugriva who receives him at the entrance itself. In spite of Lakshmana's displeasure, there happens nothing but an exchange of good wishes between him and Sugriva.

Sugriva offers Lakshmana a richly decorated seat (golden seat).⁸⁰ But he refuses to accept it, saying that when Rama is seated on a grass seat, it is not proper for him to take a golden seat. Sugriva also feels sorry for their predicament. Then Sugriva asks him to dine with them as it is time for eating food. Lakshmana does not agree even to this request because he has been eating the fruits only, left over by Rama. Since it is time for collecting fruits and tubers (vegetables) as food for Rama, Lakshmana says that he should not delay further.⁸¹ Thus this incident is depicted very ably and in a moving manner in KR.

Now, let us examine how this episode is narrated in RR.

At the instance of Rama, Lakshmana goes to the Kishkindha. Looking at his furious mood, the monkeys become frightened.

⁷⁹ KR, 4-11-52.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 4-11-108.

⁸¹ Ibid, 4-11-112.

He appears to them like Yama. When Angada approaches him, he commands him to inform Sugriva of his arrival. Sugriva is, at this time, in the company of Rama and Tara.⁸² Still, Angada informs him of the arrival of Lakshmana. Sugriva is perplexed and immediately summons his ministers.

Then Hanuman tells the king that since they have forgotten the cause of Rama, Lakshmana may have visited them to know the exact position. He, therefore, advises him not to make Lakshmana wait at the entrance but receive him well.

Sugriva, accompanied by Tara, comes to the main door to receive Lakshmana. But he trembles at his very sight. Lakshmana accuses Sugriva of ingratitude and disloyalty towards Rama. He further warns him that the arrow which has killed Vali is still emitting sparks and that it would not hesitate in killing him also.

On hearing these words, Tara becomes frightened and pleads with Lakshmana that Sugriva is his servant and that he is not indifferent to Rama. He would be ready with his armies by the full moon day of the month of *Kartika*. She further says that Sugriva is neither disloyal to Rama nor ungrateful. She finally urges that he should be excused.

Then Sugriva persuades Lakshmana to accept a golden seat.⁸³ He assures him that he has not forgotten the cause of Rama and that he would engage all the monkeys in search of Sita. He also says that the arrow which has killed Vali and which has pierced through the seven *sala* (palm) trees, is strong enough to kill the *rakshasas* and recover Sita. Still he would help Rama and thus attain everlasting fame.

To sum up, Tara is depicted in KR as a saintly woman and a widow after the death of Vali while she is a beloved of Sugriva in VR and RR. Kamban's change, though differs from the original, appears to be justifiable because Tara is regarded as one of the five chaste women according to the Hindu tradition. The characterisation of Tara in KR is, therefore, superb when compared to that of the Telugu version.

The Kishkindha Kanda in RR ends with the description of Hanuman crossing the sea and reaching the mountain Suvela

⁸² RR, p. 225.

⁸³ Ibid, p. 226.

while this is narrated in KR at the commencement of the *Sundara Kanda*. In this respect, KR is faithful to the original.

Though the above episode is narrated in RR in the *Kish-kindha Kanda*, the narration is very close to the original. The stories of Mainaka, Surasa and Simhika also are stated. In KR too, we find these stories, but the name of Simhika is given as *Ankaratarai*⁸⁴ (*Angaradhara*).

SUNDARA KANDA

Mistaking Mandodari for Sita

After reaching Lanka, Hanuman makes an intense and thorough search for Sita. Valmiki has elaborately described it. Kamban too has made a vivid description of the search. In RR, it is brief but dignified.

While searching the various apartments of the palace, Hanuman finds at one place Ravana sleeping. According to KR, Hanuman wants to kill Ravana at the very first sight.⁸⁵ But since Rama has not asked him to do so, he gives up the idea. Neither VR nor RR mentions this. Following the original, RR and KR say that Hanuman mistakes Mandodari for Sita; and afterwards, he revises his view, since Sita will neither accept Ravana nor have drinks. Here also, Kamban has made a slight deviation. Hanuman mistakes Mandodari for Sita because he notices in her some resemblances to Sita as informed to him by Rama. If it were a fact, he argues with himself that the good name of Rama would vanish soon and that evil days must have already fallen on Lanka. But the form and foolish talk of the lady he has seen, in sleep, convinces him that she could not be Sita at all. It is noteworthy that in KR there is no reference to drinks in this context.

The meeting of Hanuman and Sita

At last, Hanuman is able to find Sita in the Asoka garden, but he does not approach her all on a sudden. He sits on a *simsupa* tree and observes the woman whom he has identified as Sita. She is surrounded by several *rakshasa* women of ugly and different

⁸⁴ KR, 5-1-75.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 5-2-221.

forms. Valmiki gives here a graphic description of these women which is omitted in both RR and KR. It is merely stated in RR that Sita is in the midst of ugly *rakshasa* women.⁸⁶

According to RR, Ravana comes to Sita when Hanuman is thinking as to how he should reveal himself to her and how to talk to her. Accompanied by several *vidyadhara* women, Mandodari and other wives, Ravana approaches Sita who appears like a trembling deer at the sight of a tiger. Then Ravana asks Sita to accept his love, and seeks her consent. His words only make her sad. She takes a blade of grass and cuts it as if to indicate that Ravana would be killed in that manner. Holding that grass in her hand, she tells him that he is no equal to Rama in any respect. She speaks for a while. Since Ravana could not bear further, he takes out his sword *chandrahasa* and wants to kill Sita with it. Then Mandodari intervenes and advises her husband not to kill her. She says that he has committed seven blunders by bringing Sita to Lanka. By and by, she pacifies him.⁸⁷ (MR also mentions that "Ravana takes out his sword *chandrahasa*; but the incident is averted by a few ladies. 5-75).

Afterwards, Ravana instructs the guards, including Trijata, to win over Sita by any method and to bring her to him; it should be done within two months. Otherwise, he orders them to cut her to pieces and eat them up. Thus saying, he leaves the place.

Sita becomes grief-stricken. She wants to put an end to herself rather than fall into his (Ravana's) hands. Then she remembers Lakshmana.

After observing Sita from up the tree, Hanuman thinks that it is the opportune moment to approach her and try to lessen her anguish. But he is not sure whether she knows the language of the monkeys, in addition to Sanskrit. At last he climbs down the tree and speaks with her in *manava bhasha* (the language of man).

Though the above version is close to the original, it contains some details which are not found in Valmiki. For instance, in the original, Ravana does not take out his sword *chandrahasa* to kill Sita. He merely warns her against the dire consequences of her obstinacy. He tells her that she deserves death for several of her statements. The intervention of Mandodari too is absent in the

⁸⁶ RR, p. 250.

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 255.

original. In Valmiki, Ravana informs Sita that he is giving her two months' time to consider his proposal and by that time she should accept his love; if not, she would be cut to pieces in his kitchen for his breakfast. Further in Valmiki, it is not Mandodari, but Dhanyamalini (another wife of Ravana) that pacifies his anger. In the original, Hanuman speaks to Sita in the language of the Kosala country so that he could console her better. He does not want to speak to her in Sanskrit lest she should mistake him for Ravana or doubt the ability of a monkey to speak Sanskrit.

As regards the Tamil version, Sita is kept in the Asoka garden. She wonders when her bad days would come to an end; whether Rama has taken her for a fool since she has accused his brother Lakshmana and whether he (Rama) would abandon her on this account; or whether Destiny is responsible for her present state. She is much worried about the diurnal duties towards Rama such as the serving of fruits, tubers and vegetables brought by Lakshmana for Rama. And how does Rama feel if he has to receive some guests? Thus she is troubled by several questions and thoughts. At that time, the female demons who have been kept as watch women have fallen asleep. Sita wakes up Trijata who has been sleeping by her side. The daughter of Vibhishana and a good woman, Trijata has a high regard for Sita. Then Trijata narrates her dream in which Ravana, clad in red and seated on a chariot drawn by asses and spirits has gone to the south. She predicts that good days would befall Sita soon. Then Sita asks her to go to sleep again, so that she might know the other details of the dream.

When Sita and Trijata are engaged in discussion, Hanuman comes to the place where Sita is seated. He climbs up a nearby tree in order to observe all that happens then.

Suddenly, all the guards that have been sleeping wake up and come near Sita with weapons in their hands. Meanwhile, Ravana comes there with all his paraphernalia. He asks her to forget Rama, and to accept his love if she wants to save Rama. Unable to hear his words, she addresses a blade of grass (as if it is Ravana) warning against certain damnation that such bad words would cause. She warns him that his end is fast approaching.

Ravana grows wild at this. He threatens that he would devour her. He approaches her with his mouths widening. Then Hanuman thinks that it would be the best opportunity for

him to kill Ravana, uproot his Lanka and throw it into the sea. He also thinks of taking away Sita with him.

But Ravana becomes soft and weak when he approaches Sita owing to his love for her. He assures her that he would not kill her; but her words have provoked him to that extent. He continues further. If Sita is still adamant, he would bring those two men (Rama and Lakshmana) and kill them in her presence. He would also kill Bharata and others at Ayodhya and then he would proceed to Mithila. Finally, he would take her (Sita's) life also. She will see all this in about two months.

Before returning to his palace, Ravana warns the watchwomen that if they could not convince her, he would kill them also.

Then Hanuman desires to come down the tree and meet Sita. So, he makes all the guards fall into a deep sleep by chanting a *mantra*.

Sita feels so hurt by the words of Ravana that she wants to put an end to her life. Seeing the guards asleep, she decides that it is a good opportunity and goes near a tree to commit suicide. Then Hanuman hurriedly climbs down the tree and urges her to desist from her action and identifies himself as a messenger of Rama.

It can be seen from the above that Trijata, a good demoness is represented as (in KR) the daughter of Vibhishana.⁸⁸ According to the original, she sleeps when Ravana comes and talks to Sita. After he retires to his palace, the guards begin to harass Sita hurling several harsh words at her. Sita, unable to bear the anguish, tells them that her husband would certainly kill Ravana if he comes to know of her present state. Finally, she expresses her desire to put an end to her life. Hearing this, some of the guards grow wild against her while some go to Ravana to inform him of Sita's decision. Some of the guards again tease Sita and threaten her to devour her. It is then that Trijata wakes up and asks her colleagues not to devour Sita. She narrates to them her dream in which she has seen the downfall of the *rakshasas*. She ends her narration by saying that Rama would soon visit Lanka. Hanuman too hears her dream.

⁸⁸ KR, 5-5-1.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 5-3-30 (Commentary) and also 5-6-22.

It is, therefore, worth-noting that in KR the dream of Trijata is narrated well before the visit of Ravana. Following the original, RR narrates this account only after the visit of Ravana and the threats of the *rakshasa* women.

The message of Sita

Both RR and KR narrate the episode of Kakasura; but some of the details, as found in the original, are omitted. In KR, Sita asks Hanuman to recall an incident to Rama. This is not mentioned in Valmiki. One day, Sita asks Rama to suggest a name for her little parrot. Then Rama suggests that it may be named after his loving mother, Kaikeyi.⁸⁰ Though this is brief, this indicates the respect of Rama for Kaikeyi.

Both RR and KR have omitted another episode as found in VR. One day, Sita has no *tilak* on her forehead. Then Rama, for the sake of fun, places on her cheek the paste of a *manahsila* as *tilak*. Sita asks Hanuman to mention this to Rama. Though Sita does not say this to Hanuman, we find in RR a reference to this in his narration to Rama of his visit to Sita.⁸¹

Details about Chudamani

Sita gives Hanuman her *Chudamani* (a precious crest jewel) asking him to show it to Rama. Both RR and KR mention this. But in the original, a few details about this rare jewel are given. Sita tells Hanuman that Rama remembers her, her mother and Dasaratha as soon as he sees it. It is said that when Sita was sent to her husband's house, her mother did not remember to present the jewel. After a while she remembers and then brings it and presents it to her in the presence of Dasaratha. RR and KR do not give these details.

At the very sight of the jewel brought by Hanuman, Rama is overcome with great sorrow. As predicted by Sita, he remembers her and her father as well. He recalls how once Janaka performed a *yajna* and how Indra, pleased with it, had presented the jewel to Janaka. All the stones set in the jewel had been culled from the heart of the sea. RR has given these details, while KR is silent. According to KR, Rama is delighted at seeing the *Chudamani*.

⁸⁰ KR, 5-6-83.

⁸¹ RR, p. 281.

That delight can be compared to the happy feeling he experienced when he had taken the hand of Sita into his during marriage.⁹²

The *Sundara Kanda* in KR ends with the departure of the army of Sugriva in the southern direction. As desired by Hanuman, Rama sits on his shoulders while Lakshmana on those of Angada.⁹³ Sugriva, Jambavan and others follow them. After twelve days of journey, they reach the shore of the southern ocean. But in RR, this *kanda* ends with the narration of Hanuman to Rama of his visit to Lanka, as in the original. In the *Yuddha Kanda*, it is stated in RR that Rama and Lakshmana, seated on the shoulders of Hanuman and Nila respectively, proceed to Lanka.⁹⁴

YUDDHA KANDA

The *Yuddha Kanda* (the battle canto) is the biggest *kanda* in the Ramayana and it consists of several interesting episodes. RR and KR closely follow the original in narrating these episodes. Besides these, they contain some other episodes which are not found in Valmiki. For instance, the accounts of Kaikesi (Kaikasi according to MR), Sufochana and Kalanemi and a few other episodes are prominently narrated in RR. It is noteworthy that these are not available in KR also. Even BR does not have the story of Kaikesi. So also KR narrates the stories of Hiranyakasipu and the *Maya Janaka* (false Janaka) which are absent in VR and RR.

The advice of Vibhishana

Vibhishana, the brother of Ravana, is one of the controversial characters in the Ramayana. But a careful study of RR and KR will reveal that he is a lover of truth and righteousness. Both the Ramayanas have painted him in bright colours.

According to RR, Vibhishana plainly tells his brother to set free Sita if he wishes to save his country and people. This advice is rejected. Vibhishana does not feel sorry for it. On the contrary, he feels it is his duty to give the right advice even

⁹² KR, 5-15-82.

⁹³ Ibid. 5-15-88 and 89.

⁹⁴ RR, p. 321.

(In VR and BR, it is stated that they sat on the shoulders of Hanuman and Angada).

if it is not taken in the proper spirit. He sincerely feels that Rama does not punish Ravana if Sita is handed over to Rama; and that alone can save Lanka. He finally warns his brother that Lanka would soon be ruined on account of Sita, even as the *Asoka vana* has been destroyed by Hanuman. Ravana unable to bear these plain words becomes violent. He wants to kill Vibhishana with his sword, and assaults him.⁹⁵ Then he falls down. When Ravana takes up his sword to kill his brother, his minister Prahasta intervenes and averts the fratricide. Then, Vibhishana, asked to leave Lanka, gladly agrees. Before leaving the court, he declares that he would surrender himself to Rama.

Afterwards, Vibhishana goes to his aged mother, Kaikesi, and tells her what has happened in the court.⁹⁶ She advises him to meet Rama and seek his blessings and save the *rakshasa* race. Then Vibhishana and four other *rakshasas* fly in the air to surrender to Rama.

In this connection, it may be said that neither Valmiki nor Kamban say that Ravana beats Vibhishana. This is found only in RR, not even in BR. But MR mentions this incident (6-30).

In KR also, Vibhishana gives his brother sound advice. He even tells him the story of Hiranyakasipu, a mighty *rakshasa* king who meets with death at the hands of Vishnu in the form of man-lion (*nara kesari*).⁹⁷ Vibhishana firmly believes that Ravana's enmity with Lord Vishnu Himself would bring about the complete downfall of the demon race. He, therefore, boldly tells Ravana to regard Rama as the very incarnation of Narayana but not as an ordinary man as he seems to think. While saying so, Kamban has narrated the story of Hiranyakasipu in detail. Thereby he has indicated well in advance that Ravana too would be killed by Rama, another incarnation of Lord Vishnu. This is a significant change made by Kamban and this deviation is justifiable.

We do not find the story of Hiranyakasipu in the original or in RR. But it is worth noting that RR refers to the above story in the *Bala Kanda*. When the gods approach Brahma and inform

⁹⁵ RR, p. 301.

⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 301 and 302.

⁹⁷ KR, 6-3-1 to 176.

Him of the various atrocities of Ravana, he tells them that the demon king would be killed neither by the *rakshasas*, nor by the *gandharvas*. Brahma further says that when Hiranyakasipu had been a terror to all the worlds, Narayana assumed the form of man-lion and killed him. The same Hiranyakasipu has again taken birth as Ravana, the son of Visravasu and hence Narayana would again kill him.

KR does not say anything about Vibhishana's visit to his mother before leaving Lanka. Ravana orders him to leave him soon and threatens to kill him if he (Vibhishana) should speak again. Immediately, he flies into the sky and from there urges his brother once again not to ruin himself. Then along with his followers, he goes to Rama.

The Ocean-God

In KR, Varuna, the Ocean-God, is invoked by Rama for His blessings. Though he chants the *Varuna mantra* for seven days, he does not appear.¹⁰⁰ Rama becomes violent and finally is about to use the *Brahmastra*. Then God Varuna appears before him and explains that as he had to avert a terrible fight that had taken place beyond the seven seas between the fishes, he could not hear him.

In RR, Rama invokes the blessings of the Ocean-God namely *Samudra* for three days, as stated in the original.¹⁰¹ Further, we do not find in RR any such explanation as given by Varuna in KR.

The devotion of a squirrel

During the construction of the great bridge (*setu*) across the ocean, RR recounts the interesting story of a squirrel which is not found either in the original or in Kamban. Having seen the monkeys lifting and throwing mountains and trees into the ocean, a squirrel thinks that it also should assist the monkeys in expediting the construction of the bridge across the ocean. So it begins to take a dip in the ocean first and then roll itself in the sands on the sea-shore and later drop the little sand particles, deposited on its

⁹⁸ RR, p. 16.

⁹⁹ KR, 6-4-11 and 12.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 6-6-6.

¹⁰¹ RR, p. 311.

body, on the construction. Thus it repeats this process with great devotion. Rama is so pleased and moved by its devotion that he takes the squirrel in his palm and gently pats it on the back. As a result, three stripes show on its body.¹⁰²

This interesting story is very popular in the Telugu country and is remembered even to this day. This is also narrated in the Tamil country.¹⁰³ Tondaradippodi Alwar, a distinguished Vaishnava saint-poet, has narrated this incident in one of his *pasurams* (hymns).¹⁰⁴

The sorrow of Kaikesi

The sorrow of Kaikesi, the aged mother of Ravana, as described in RR is found neither in the original nor in KR. BR too does not mention the story of Kaikesi.

On learning the news that Rama and Lakshmana have reached the *Suvēladri*, Kaikesi gets worried about the future of Lanka. She is convinced that Lanka would be destroyed even if Brahma and Siva come to its rescue. Though she is very old, she goes to Ravana and advises him to mend his ways. She discloses the fact that Sita was no other than Vedavati who cursed him earlier. She also tells him that Rama is Narayana Himself and hence enmity with Him would lead to one's downfall and destruction only. Kaikesi explains several philosophical truths. Her final suggestion is that Ravana should hand over Sita to her husband and save himself and Lanka from the impending calamity. But all this is of no avail as Ravana is adamant. He turns a deaf ear even to his mother's advice.¹⁰⁵

Angada and Ravana

Prior to the actual declaration of war, Rama sends Angada to Ravana as his messenger. On hearing that Angada is the son of Vali, according to KR, Ravana recalls his friendship with Vali and dissuades Angada from serving Rama who had killed Vali. He assures him that he (Ravana) would treat him as his son and crown him king of the monkeys. Thus he would attain

¹⁰² RR, p. 319.

¹⁰³ I understand from Ki. Va. Jagannathan that this episode has been mentioned in a folk song in Tamil.

¹⁰⁴ *Divijayapirabandam*, Tirumalai.

¹⁰⁵ RR, p. 322.

Kishkindha which is his father's kingdom. Finally, Ravana urges him to be with him. But Angada rejects the offer.¹⁰⁶

The story is somewhat different in RR. Angada introduces himself to Ravana as the messenger of Rama. Then follows a volley of questions and answers regarding Rama and Angada. At one stage, Ravana becomes so violent with Angada that he calls him *vanacharddhama* (base or wicked monkey). Then Ravana himself refers to Hanuman and his whereabouts. Angada replies: 'The elders amongst the monkeys were not happy with Hanuman as he was captured by you and his tail burnt. So they lashed at his cheeks and drove him away. The poor monkey has flown to Pampa. From the army, two weak monkeys — one is Hanuman and the other myself — have been selected for doing such menial jobs as this.' Ravana was astonished to hear this.¹⁰⁷

Ravana praising Rama

According to RR, Ravana wants to instil fear in the minds of Rama and his followers and hence exhibits all the precious things that he has acquired in battles in such a manner so as to be seen by Rama. Rama looks at them, and on enquiry learns from Vibhishana that they are precious ornaments that Ravana has obtained by defeating the gods. Then Rama gently shoots an arrow as if to show his skill in archery which removes the necklaces worn by the maids attending on Ravana and breaks the umbrella and the *chamara* of Ravana without hurting anyone.

Ravana is quite astonished at this feat of Rama. He even forgets for the moment his enmity with Rama and begins to praise his skill in archery. He also remarks that there is none in the world who could excel Rama in archery. On hearing these praises, his ministers observe that an enemy should not be so liberally extolled. But Ravana replies that the greatness of mighty heroes should be extolled, and leaves the place.¹⁰⁸

This episode, though not found in VR, KR and BR, is narrated in an interesting manner in RR. This clearly brings out the great quality in Ravana, namely, the grace of sportsmanship to appreciate the greatness of a hero even if he be his worst enemy.

¹⁰⁶ KR, 6-13-28 and 29.

¹⁰⁷ RR, p. 356.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 356.

Net-work of serpent-arrows

The war commences and the monkeys and the demons fight with each other. Indrajit, the son of Ravana and a great hero, also enters the battlefield. Angada strikes him. Enraged at it, Indrajit shoots his terrible serpent-arrows (*nagastra*). As a result, both Rama and Lakshmana are bound with a net-work of serpent-arrows and the monkey-chiefs become grief stricken. Then, according to Valmiki, Garuda soon comes to the scene. On seeing him, all the serpents run away and thus Indrajit's net-work of serpent-arrows is foiled.

RR has narrated all the above details. Besides these, it contains some more details which are not found in Valmiki or in Kamban. Seeing the net-work of serpents, the perplexed monkey-chiefs discuss the further action to be taken. Then Sushena consoles them by saying that there are some divine herbs on the Drona mountain and that they could foil the net-work of arrows. Then the sage Nārada comes there and reminds Rama of his original form namely the form of Vishnu. He suggests that the net-work of serpent-arrows would be foiled by Garuda, his *vahana*. Only then Rama thinks of Garuda and he immediately appears and later Rama and Lakshmana are freed from the serpent-arrows.¹⁰⁹

It can be seen from the above that the Telugu poet has brought the sage Narada to the scene for a definite purpose. It is interesting to note that BR also mentions the intervention of Narada. But in the original, Garuda himself comes and helps his master.

We find in KR the *nogapasa-p-padalam* (net-work of serpent-arrows) not at the beginning of the war as stated in the original and RR, but after the death of Kumbhakarna. In VR and RR, Kumbhakarna enters the battlefield only after the net-work of serpent-arrows was foiled. In fact, Kumbhakarna has been fast asleep all the while. So it may be said that there is a slight shift in the plot in KR.¹¹⁰

In KR, it is mentioned that Indrajit hears the weeping of the *rakshasa* women near his palace and no one tells him the reason even on enquiry. Then he approaches his father who tells him that his brother Atikayan and several others have been killed in

¹⁰⁹ RR, p. 370.

¹¹⁰ KR, 6-18.

the battle. He also informs him that Lakshmana and some monkeys have killed them. Indrajit then takes leave of his father and goes to the battlefield.

Lakshmana, seated on the shoulders of Hanuman, fights with Indrajit. At one stage, Indrajit becomes so tired that he has to rest for a while. Then Vibhishana suggests that Indrajit should be killed then as night is approaching and that he is an adept in the tricks of magic. Accordingly, Lakshmana gets ready to shoot a powerful arrow at Indrajit who, in the meanwhile, goes up and hides himself in the clouds. Soon after, he uses the terrible serpent-arrow as a result of which, Lakshmana, Hanuman and others swoon and fall down. Only Vibhishana could escape from it. Learning this, Rama is so overcome with sorrow that he considers his brother and others as really dead at the hands of Indrajit.

The Gods, including Garuda, who have been witnessing the battle from heaven see Rama weeping and are moved by it. Unable to witness it further, Garuda soon appears before Rama and reminds him of his original form. Garuda, then, extolls Rama in several words. Afterwards, he frees Lakshmana and others and goes away.

From the above account, it is obvious that Rama in KR is not bound by the net-work of serpent-arrows and that Garuda himself comes to the rescue of Lakshmana and others. So, there is no need for the intervention of Narada in KR.

Hanuman takes Lakshmana away from the battlefield

In the terrible fight that takes place between Lakshmana and Ravana, the former swoons, hit by the arrow given by Brahma to Ravana. Then Ravana wants to carry Lakshmana away. Though he tries his best to lift him up, he cannot. Meanwhile, Hanuman comes there. According to KR, Hanuman rushes to the spot and quickly carries away Lakshmana and places him before Rama. But RR gives a different version. RR describes a straight fight between Ravana and Hanuman in which Ravana falls down. Then Hanuman carries away Lakshmana, as he is a devotee of Vishnu.

According to KR also, there is a straight fight between Ravana and Hanuman. But this happens before Lakshmana's combat with Ravana.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ KR, 6-14-213.

Though there are such minor differences, it is noteworthy that RR and KR are close to each other in the narration of the main events of the battle.

Kumbhakarna

After returning to his city in the wake of a defeat at the hands of Rama, Ravana concludes that only Kumbhakarna could fight against Rama. So, he orders his men to wake him up from his long sleep. With great difficulty, they awaken him. Both RR and KR have given a graphic description of Kumbhakarna in this connection. It suggests that he is a terrible demon of very huge size. But he has very fine qualities too in him.

According to RR, Kumbhakarna, after he wakes up, takes a bath leisurely and adorns himself with good clothes and precious ornaments.¹¹² (In Valmiki, it is stated that he only washes his face). Then he takes his food and enquires of the welfare of the king (his brother) and others. He announces that he would fight against anyone who attacks Lanka. When he is informed of Ravana's plight at the battle and the prowess of Rama, he becomes violent with anger and says that he would kill Rama and Lakshmana and the monkeys in the battle.

Before leaving for the battle field, Kumbhakarna calls on his brother. Then Ravana urges him to save the city, Lanka, by killing Rama and his brother. Then Kumbhakarna advises him and warns that a person who desires another man's wife and wealth would bring downfall to his own race. But Ravana would not hear him. Finally, Kumbhakarna says that he would go to the battlefield. However, he recalls Narada's words to him that Rama is not an ordinary man, but an incarnation of Vishnu. Then Ravana discloses to his brother that he too knows everything about Rama and Sita and that he has abducted Sita not because of love or anger but because of his wish to die at the hands of Rama and attain the abode of Vishnu.¹¹³

Kumbhakarna goes to the battlefield and puts up a heroic fight. During the fight, Vibhishana meets him and their meeting is a moving scene. Finally, Kumbhakarna is killed by Rama.

In KR, we find Kumbhakarna as a lovable character. When

¹¹² RR, p. 400.

¹¹³ Ibid, p. 406.

he gives advice to Ravana, the latter grows wild against him. Then Kumbhakarna decides that any further advice would serve no purpose and so goes to the battlefield, saying that he would never return from the war. He also requests his brother to forgive him for his mistakes, if any.¹¹⁴ On hearing these words, Ravana is overcome with affection for his brother and tears roll down his cheeks. Then Kumbhakarna leaves for the battlefield.

Vibhishana gives a very good report on Kumbhakarna when Rama enquires about him.¹¹⁵ He says that his brother may have come to the battlefield in the hope that he would get salvation at the hands of Rama. Then Rama says to Vibhishana that if it were a fact, he could bring Kumbhakarna to his presence.

Kumbhakarna sees Vibhishana coming in his direction. All the while he is happy at the thought that Vibhishana is saved by joining the company of Rama. He is therefore surprised to see him in his camp. Thinking that he has given up Rama's company, Kumbhakarna asks him to go back to Rama at once so that at least one of the brothers would be alive to perform last rites for them; and he bursts into tears. But when Vibhishana informs him of his mission, Kumbhakarna becomes angry and says that though Ravana is wicked, he is his (Kumbhakarna's) king and master. Further, Ravana has reposed in him great confidence and hence he should not desert him at the critical juncture. He then embraces Vibhishana and asks him to go back to Rama.¹¹⁶

As promised to his brother, Kumbhakarna fights till his last breath. He wants to be killed by Rama and at last has his desire fulfilled. Before his death, he urges Rama to protect Vibhishana.

Thus KR has depicted Kumbhakarna as a loving and grateful brother. The meeting of Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana reads like a drama.¹¹⁷

The false Janaka

In KR, it is stated that while Kumbhakarna is fighting with great vigour against the monkeys and Rama, Ravana sits in his

¹¹⁴ KR, 6-15-98.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. 6-15-127.

¹¹⁶ KR, 6-15-155.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. 6-15-356 to 59.

palace, engrossed with thoughts about Sita. On the suggestion of Mahodara, it has been decided to bring before Sita a false Janaka who would advise her to accept the love of Ravana.¹¹⁸ This incident is not mentioned in VR or RR.

In accordance with the plan, Ravana visits Sita and urges her to sympathise with him and accept his love. He also bowed down at her feet. But Sita ignores him and says in great contempt that it is certain that all the demons would be killed by her husband. Meanwhile, Mahodara and other demons bring the false Janaka dragging him on the ground. At first Sita takes him to be her own father and hence feels sorry for him. The false Janaka extolls Ravana and asks her to comply with his wish. When Sita rebukes him, Ravana becomes violent and threatens to kill her father. Meanwhile, two *rakshasas* come there and report to him the death of Kumbhakarna. At once Ravana is overcome with sorrow; and he begins to recall the heroic deeds of his brother. After a while, Ravana leaves the place saying that he would kill those two men — Rama and Lakshmana. Mahodara and the false Janaka also leave the place. On learning that the false Janaka is not at all her father, Sita feels happy.

Kamban may have added this episode to show that Sita has not yielded to any of the threats of Ravana; nor is she influenced by Ravana's devilish machinations.

The advice of Mandodari to Ravana

According to RR, Mandodari advises Ravana to give up Sita before the first battle has taken place between him and Rama. She asks him to return Sita to Rama and surrender himself to him in order to save Lanka and the *rakshasa* race. She even suggests that a treaty might be made with Rama and that Vibhishana might help in this regard. But the adamant Ravana does not consider any one of the proposals put forward by his loyal wife.

This incident is described only in RR.¹¹⁹ This clearly brings out the anxiety of Mandodari to save her husband and race and country from the impending calamity.

¹¹⁸ KR, 6-16-1 to 95.

¹¹⁹ RR, pp. 386-387.

Indrajit's second battle

After the death of several *rakshasa* leaders, Indrajit comes to the battlefield for the second time. This time he uses the powerful *Brahmastra*. According to RR, Rama, Lakshmana and several others wilt and swoon under the attack. Only Vibhishana and Hanuman are able to escape from it. But KR states that only Lakshmana and others swoon on account of the missile and at that time Rama is out of the battlefield.¹²⁰ When Rama comes and sees his brother, Sugriva and others in an unconscious state, he thinks them dead. So, overcome with deep sorrow, Rama too swoons.

On hearing this news, Ravana becomes jubilant. He then orders that Sita should be taken to the battlefield in an aerial car (*pushpaka*) so that she may personally see the corpses of Rama and Lakshmana, and then agree to his proposal. Accordingly, it is done and Trijata consoles the grief-stricken Sita.

It is interesting to observe that in RR, Sita is brought by the aerial car to the battle field when Rama and Lakshmana have been bound by the net-work of serpent-arrows.¹²¹ Thus the Telugu and Tamil versions differ regarding the insertion of the above incident in the main story, though the details are almost the same.

Ravana desires to kill Sita

The news of Indrajit's death in the battle with Lakshmana plunges Ravana in sorrow. RR has described his sorrow at length and in moving terms. At one stage, Ravana thinks that all the worlds have lost a great hero in the death of Indrajit. He also believes that Sita is the cause of the death of his sons, brothers, relatives and followers. So, he wants to kill her.

Then the furious Ravana approaches Sita holding in his hand the sword *chandrahasa*. Sita trembles at his sight and swoons. Then Suparsva who comes there boldly tells him that killing a chaste lady is a sin and thus averts the tragedy.¹²²

Kamban too describes the deep sorrow of Ravana at the death of his son. Later, Mandodari also joins him. She feels that this calamity has occurred owing to Sita who is like poison;

¹²⁰ KR, 6-21-173 to 181.

¹²¹ RR, p. 366.

¹²² Ibid, p. 475.

and says that the worst might happen to the king of Lanka also later.¹²³ Mandodari's words convince Ravana that Sita is at the bottom of all those evils and so he wants to kill her with his sword. The tragedy is averted by Mahodara.

It can be seen from the above that RR has no reference to Mandodari at this juncture, while in KR, Ravana wants to kill Sita incensed by the words of Mandodari.

The episode of Sulochana

One of the moving episodes in RR is that of Sulochana, the wife of Indrajit. Neither Valmiki nor Kamban has given her account. Even BR does not tell her story. The story of Sulochana as narrated in RR in 324 lines is briefly given below.¹²⁴

Sulochana, the daughter of Adisesha, deeply mourns the loss of her husband and decides to commit *sahagamana* (burn herself on the funeral pyre of her husband). Looking at her children, she feels reassured by the thought that Vibhishana would take care of them. Then she approaches Ravana and asks him to recover the dead body of Indrajit from the battlefield. But, he expresses his helplessness in the matter. Bowing down at his feet, she then leaves for the battlefield in the hope that she could get the dead body. When she flies in the air, the monkeys take her for Sita.

She approaches Rama and extols him. After introducing herself to him, she says she could not live without her husband and requests Rama to revive him. Rama, being an incarnation of pity, is moved by her words. Meanwhile, Hanuman who knows the mind of Rama suggests to respect the word of Brahma. Then Rama changes his mind and comforts her that she and her husband finally would attain Vaikuntha in their next birth. Sugriva, intervening, asks her to speak with her husband if she is a 'chaste' lady. Accordingly, she speaks to the dead body of Indrajit and he replies. Then the dead body is handed over to her. She returns with it to Lanka.

Afterwards, Sulochana sends her sons to *patala*, the abode of Adisesha and goes to Ravana and seeks his permission for *sahagamana*. As he is immersed in sorrow, he replies that she can do

¹²³ KR, pp. 476-480.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 6-28-54.

as she likes. Then with great pleasure and spotless devotion, Sulochana burns herself with the body of her husband.

Thus Sulochana, the chaste lady, sets noble example. It may be said that a character like Sulochana is rare to be found among the *rakshasa* women.

Though this story of Sulochana is not narrated in VR in its present form, it is found in the *Ananda Ramayana* (eleventh sarga).¹²⁵

The story of Kalanemi

VR in its present form does not have the story of Kalanemi. KR too does not contain it. But this is narrated in the Telugu Ramayanams, namely RR and BR. Mallampalli Somasekhara Sarma has stated that the story in question is available in the North Western recension of VR and the Italian edition of VR (printed in 1850), but with slight variations.¹²⁶ Whatever the position might be, it is worthy of note that the above story has found a place only in the Telugu versions of the Ramayana.¹²⁷

Lakshmana swoons wounded by the arrow shot by Ravana. Then as suggested by Sushena, Hanuman flies to the Drona mountain to bring the herb Sanjivi. After hearing the news of the departure of Hanuman, Ravana wants to create obstacles in his way so that the return of Hanuman can be delayed. Hence in the dead of night, Ravana goes alone to the house of Kalanemi, one of his trusted followers, and urges him to kill Hanuman or create obstacles in his way till the sunrise by which time Lakshmana will die. But Kalanemi advises the king to return Sita to Rama or to fight with him and attain the feet of Lord Vishnu. This enrages Ravana, who draws his sword to attack him. Then Kalanemi agrees to obey him and immediately leaves. He dresses himself like a sage and brings into existence an *asrama* (hermitage) on the way of Hanuman. On seeing the hermitage which has not been noticed earlier, Hanuman thinks that he has missed the track and comes down to enquire the sage as to the right path. Since he feels thirsty, he asks the sage to show him some water to drink. The sage offers him water from his small

¹²⁵ *Ananda Ramayanam* (Tel. tr.), p. 188.

¹²⁶ RR, pp. 17-34 (preface).

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 501; MR also mentions this episode (6-2-65 to 72).

vessel (*kamandala*) and asks him to stay with him at his hermitage for that night. But Hanuman rejects the offer of hospitality for the night in view of Lakshmana's helpless unconscious state in the battlefield. He asks the sage to show him some nearby river or tank so that he could quench his thirst. Accordingly, he is shown a tank.

Without the least hesitation, Hanuman steps into the tank and begins to drink water. Then suddenly a big crocodile living in the tank swallows him. But Hanuman comes out of its mouth and kills it. Soon it turns out to be a beautiful woman by name Dhanyamalini. She discloses to Hanuman that she has been freed from her curse and informs him that the sage is a *rakshasa* who wants to kill him. She advises him to kill the sage. Accordingly, Hanuman kills the false sage, Kalanemi, and proceeds to the Drona mountain.

The dream of Bharata

After reaching the mountain, Chitrāsena and other *Gandharvas* who guard it attack Hanuman. But he subdues their pride. Then he resumes his journey in the air carrying the mountain.

While returning to the battlefield, Hanuman sees Bharata at Nandigramā and mistakes him for Rama. That night Bharata has a bad dream about Rama and Lakshmana and immediately summons the Brahmins and performs some *homās* to mollify the evil effects of the dream. When Bharata looks at the sky, he sees the flying Hanuman and thinks that he is some bad spirit. So, he wants to shoot him down with his arrows and at that time he hears an unknown voice saying that he is their well-wisher.

This incident too is not narrated either in the original or in KR. But this is found in BR. This and the earlier incident as well depict Hanuman as a brave warrior and a sincere devotee of Rama.

Malyavanta attacks Hanuman

Another episode which is not found in VR and KR but is narrated in RR and BR is the fight between Hanuman and Malyavanta, the grandfather of Ravana.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ RR, p. 509.

¹²⁹ Ibid, p. 510.

According to RR, Malyavanta, instigated by Ravana, attacks Hanuman, the carrier of *sanjivi*, when he comes near the ocean. As a result of the fight, Malyavanta is thrown into the ocean from where he sinks to the *patala*.

Meanwhile, Rama, who has been eagerly expecting Hanuman with the herb, begins to lose hope. Then Hanuman arrives at the place; and with the help of *sanjivi*, Lakshmana regains his senses.

Kamban has narrated this entire incident very briefly.¹³⁰ It is stated in KR that on seeing Lakshmana swoon, Jambavan urges Hanuman to bring the herb *sanjivi* before Rama sees his brother in that condition. Immediately, Hanuman leaves for the mountain and brings the herb. As soon as he smells it, Lakshmana wakes up, as if from sleep, and extols Hanuman. Meanwhile, Rama returns from the battlefield having killed innumerable demons. On hearing from Jambavan about the swoon of Lakshmana and other details, Rama is pleased with Hanuman and embraces him. Thus the difference between the Tamil and Telugu versions is obvious. It is significant to note that in KR no obstacle has been mentioned during the journey of Hanuman to the mountain.

Ravana approaches Sukra

It is stated in KR that Ravana who has been all the while thinking that Lakshmana has been killed, learns from his messengers that he has regained his senses after smelling the herb. Ravana becomes alarmed at this and goes to his counsel room after personally verifying the news.¹³¹

But according to RR, the alarmed Ravana approaches Sukra, his teacher, and urges him to tell him some device by which he can kill Rama. Sukra asks him to perform a *homa* un-interrupted, from which would emerge a chariot with horses, terrific arrows and swords and that they would bring him victory.¹³²

This episode is not found in VR, but found in BR.

¹³⁰ KR, 6-23-15 to 101.

¹³¹ Ibid, 6-24-21.

¹³² Ibid, p. 517.

Ravana performs homa

The following is the account of Ravana performing a *homa* as stated in RR.¹³³

As directed by Sukra, Ravana begins to perform the *homa* in an underground cave. The emanating fumes pervade the whole sky. On seeing them, the Gods, the sages and the monkeys fear that even Gods cannot defeat Ravana if the *homa* is completed without any interruption. They decide to prevent Ravana from completing the *homa*; and Rama approves of it.

The monkeys try their best to distract the attention of Ravana, but to no purpose. Sarama, the wife of Vibhishana shows to Angada the place where Ravana is performing the *homa*. Seeing him undisturbed like a sleeping mountain, Angada goes to the palace and drags Mandodari to the presence of Ravana. Disturbed by her weeping, Ravana leaves his place and rescues his wife from Angada. Thus his *homa* is interrupted.

Mandodari tells Ravana the greatness of Rama

According to RR, then Ravana says to his wife that he would kill Rama in the battle; if he is defeated, she might enter fire after killing Sita. Then Mandodari describes to her husband the greatness of Rama and the mighty demons whom he had killed in his previous incarnations. Afterwards, Ravana leaves for the battlefield for the third time.¹³⁴

This account is found in RR and BR while it is absent in VR and KR.

According to KR, Ravana worships Siva,¹³⁵ the family deity, and then leaves for the battlefield. Thus the Tamil poet has described Ravana as a devotee of Siva.

Heads and hands newly grow on Ravana

Both KR and RR state that new heads and hands grow on the trunk of Ravana, whenever they are cut down by the arrows of Rama. Baffled by this strange phenomenon, Rama, according to KR, takes out the same arrow which had on an earlier occasion pierced through the seven palm trees and killed Vali. He aims

¹³³ RR. p. 517; MR also mentions this (6-3-4).

¹³⁴ Ibid, p. 522.

¹³⁵ KR, 6-34-3.

it at Ravana chanting a *mantra*; and Ravana is killed with it (*brahmastra*).¹²⁶

The Telugu version is slightly different from the above. In RR, it is mentioned that new heads and hands grow on Ravana's person whenever they are cut and Rama is perplexed at it. Then Vibhishana discloses that the navel of Ravana contains *amrita* (nectar) and hence he asks him to aim the *agneya* arrow which would dry up the nectar.¹²⁷ In accordance with Vibhishana's advice, Rama first destroys the source of Ravana's strength and then fells him down with his most powerful *brahmastra*.

The detail that Ravana has got nectar in his navel is not narrated either in the original or in KR. This is mentioned in BR. But there, it is Matali, the charioteer, that discloses the above secret. It is said that the North-West recension of VR also mentions the name of Matali and not Vibhishana in this connection.

Rama's doubt cleared

Lakshmana and others become jubilant at the victory of Rama over Ravana. According to KR, Rama then shows them the body of Ravana and says that he (Ravana) had already received some cuts on the back which indicate his defeat at some battles. And hence Rama is not happy at his killing Ravana who had already been a defeated warrior. Vibhishana replies that as there had been no one to fight with Ravana, he used to fight with the sturdy elephants (*diggajas*) lying at the eight corners of the world. As a result, the elephants had slashed him with their tusks and hence the cuts on his back. On learning that Ravana had been a real warrior, Rama feels happy to have killed him.¹²⁸

This detail is narrated only in KR while it is not found in RR. This brings out the greatness of Ravana as a mighty warrior.

The death of Mandodari

On seeing the dead body of Ravana in the battlefield, his queen Mandodari bitterly weeps and her deep sorrow is described in moving terms in both KR and RR. Noticing the innumerable

¹²⁶ KR, 6-26-197.

¹²⁷ RR, p. 539; MR mentions this detail (6-3-96).

¹²⁸ KR, 6-36-211 to 215.

arrow¹³⁹ on the body, it is stated in KR, Mandodari wonders whether Rama had shot all those arrows at him in order to gauge the depth of Ravana's love for Sita.¹³⁹ Grief-stricken and forlorn, she bitterly bemoans the death of her husband and dies, heart-broken. Vibhishana, overcome with great sorrow, later performs the last rites for both Ravana and Mandodari.¹⁴⁰

In RR, Rama tells Vibhishana that his brother had been a great warrior and deserves every praise. At the instance of Rama, Vibhishana performs the last rites for Ravana.¹⁴¹ In the original also, it is stated that at the instance of Rama only, Vibhishana performs the funeral rites of Ravana after the widows of Ravana including Mandodari retire.

It can, therefore, be noticed from the above that Vibhishana in KR performs the last rites for both Ravana and Mandodari. According to the Hindu tradition, Mandodari is one of the five chaste women and hence Kamban's deviation from the original, namely, describing her death soon after seeing the dead body of her husband, is justifiable in terms of the social belief of his time that a chaste woman never survives her husband. So this departure from the original ennobles and elevates the character of Mandodari.

Fitting reward to Hanuman

As ordered by Rama, Hanuman conveys to Sita the happy news of her husband's victory over Ravana in the battle. Immensely pleased with him, Sita is at a loss to decide on a fitting reward to Hanuman for the glad tidings. According to Valmiki, Hanuman is satisfied with her affectionate words. RR also has said the same, following VR. But in KR, Sita asks Hanuman for his suggestion. Thereupon, he requests her to allow him to serve her and Rama for ever. Sita gladly grants his request.¹⁴²

Rama's request to Dasaratha

After Sita proves her chastity by entering the fire, Rama accepts her as his wife. The re-union of Sita and Rama makes all the celestial beings very happy. Dasaratha also comes there

¹³⁹ KR, 6-36-239.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. 6-36-249.

¹⁴¹ RR, p. 546.

¹⁴² KR, 6-37-30.

to see his son. After he blesses him, Rama addresses his father: "O! knower of Dharma! be gracious to Kaikeyi and Bharata! O Lord! that curse which was uttered to Kaikeyi by you, 'I shall forsake you along with your son', let not that terrible curse affect Kaikeyi or her son." The request was granted.

Kamban has narrated the above with a slight difference. Pleased with his son, Dasaratha offers to grant him a boon. Then Rama requests his father to allow him to treat Kaikeyi and Bharata as his mother and brother respectively whom Dasaratha had renounced earlier. Dasaratha agrees to this.¹⁴³

This detail is not found in RR.

Installation of 'Sivalinga' by Rama

Rama and others start for Ayodhya in the divine air-craft, *pushpaka*. In RR, it is mentioned that when it approaches the *setu* (bridge across the sea), Ravana, assuming a horrible form, appears before Rama. Vibhishana then advises the perplexed Rama that it is only the form of *brahmahatya* (the killing of a Brahmin) and that the sin should be atoned for. Afterwards as suggested by Brahma, Rama decides to instal a *Sivalinga* (idol of Siva) there, and hence urges Hanuman to bring an idol from Varanasi. Since Hanuman fails to return in time and as the auspicious time nears, Rama instals a *linga* made of sand. Then Hanuman arrives with a *linga* from Varanasi and feels disappointed at seeing the *linga* already installed. Rama consoles him by saying that he is his brother and hence the idol brought by him might be placed by the side of the idol he has just consecrated. He also enjoins that the *linga* brought by Hanuman should be worshipped first. Hanuman is highly pleased.¹⁴⁴

It is significant that there is no mention in VR of the installation by Rama of a *linga* at Rameswaram. Though KR speaks of the greatness of the *setu*,¹⁴⁵ the above incident as narrated in RR is not available in it. There is also a long folk-song in Telugu entitled *Setu Mahatmyam* (the greatness of Setu) in which the story as mentioned in RR is narrated in detail.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ KR, 6-37-129.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, pp. 559-60.

¹⁴⁵ Tamil scholars are of the opinion that the passage pertaining to this incident is a definite later addition.

¹⁴⁶ *Strila Ramayana Patalu*, pp. 176-186.

The wives of the monkeys accompany Rama

As the *pushpaka* approaches Kishkindha, it is stated in KR that Sita requests her husband to invite the women-folk of the monkeys also to Ayodhya. Then they are invited to join the party.¹⁴⁷

Though this is a brief event, this clearly brings out the affection of Sita towards the women-folk of the monkeys who have helped Rama a great deal. This interesting detail is not found in RR.

Guha prepares for self-immolation

After reaching the hermitage of the sage Bharadvaja, Rama asks Hanuman to inform in advance Guha and Bharata of their arrival.¹⁴⁸ In KR, it is merely stated that Hanuman conveys the happy news to Guha and then leaves for Nandigrama, the place of Bharata's residence. But we find in RR, a detailed account of Guha and his preparation for self-immolation.¹⁴⁹

As Rama does not turn up as expected, Guha is much worried and he suffers grave misgivings. He is about to enter fire, then Hanuman comes there and informs him of Rama's return. Guha feels happy at it and abandons his plan to put an end to his life.

Guha's great devotion to Rama is well depicted in the above episode which is not found in the original.

Bharata and Satrughna prepare for self-immolation

At Nandigrama, Bharata is immersed in sorrow since Rama has not returned as promised. He, therefore, wants to commit suicide by entering a fire. Satrughna also decides to follow his brother. It is stated in RR that all those who come to know of this news are overcome with sorrow. Then Hanuman comes there and tells Bharata in detail about all the incidents that have taken place during the exile of Rama.

In KR also the above is related with this difference that Kausalya, accompanied by Sumitra and other royal ladies, comes to Bharata and tries to dissuade him from his suicide attempt. But

¹⁴⁷ KR, 6-37-176.

¹⁴⁸ RR, p. 564.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 565.

he turns a deaf ear to her and goes near the fire to fall in. Satrugna also follows him. Then Hanuman appears there and averts the tragedy. It is further mentioned in KR that Hanuman, while introducing himself to Bharata, assumes a huge size to inspire confidence in them.¹⁵⁰ Other details then follow.

There is a folk-song in Telugu describing the above story and it is called *Guha Bhadrakula Agnipravesam*.¹⁵¹ It is a very interesting song and it is worthy of note that in it is mentioned, as in KR, Kausalya's advice to Bharata when he tries to kill himself by entering the fire.

The meeting of Guha and Rama

It is stated in KR that Guha meets Rama during his stay at the hermitage of the sage Bharadvaja.¹⁵² But according to RR, Guha comes to Nandigrama and meets Rama.¹⁵³ On seeing him in matted locks, Rama asks him to get dressed as befits a member of the royal family. Accordingly, he does and then joins the service of Rama.

This detail also provides an interesting insight into Guha's special status in the story.

The Coronation of Rama

Both KR and RR have given beautiful descriptions of the coronation of Rama. It is said in KR that Vasishtha places on the head of Rama a crown which has been given to him by an ancestor of Chadayappa of Tiruvonnainallur.¹⁵⁴ This is a deliberate change made by Kamban to show his gratitude to Chadayappa, his patron. Vibhishana, Sugriva, Hanuman, Guha and others are duly honoured by Rama and afterwards they all leave for their respective places. Before they leave, Rama tells them that they could visit him at any time whenever they liked. Thus the story in KR ends with happy sentiments.

We find in RR two very interesting episodes which are not narrated either in VR or KR. After duly honouring Vibhishana, Hanuman and others, Rama asks them to dine with him. Vibhi-

¹⁵⁰ KR, 6-37-257.

¹⁵¹ *Srila Ramayanapu Patalu*, pp. 187-199.

¹⁵² KR, 6-37-312.

¹⁵³ RR, p. 565.

¹⁵⁴ KR, 6-38-38.

shana and other demon chiefs, Sugriva and other monkeys, Guha and several others dine with him. Hanuman sits by the side of Rama. Taking a lump of food in his hand, Rama asks him to commence eating. Then Hanuman takes the plate of Rama with devotion and places it on his head. He ascends a tree and distributes the food left over in the plate to all other monkeys. Rama is pleased with the spotless devotion of Hanuman.¹⁵⁵

Afterwards, Rama sits in the court. Sita, Lakshmana, Bharata and others take their allotted seats. Then at one stage, Lakshmana laughs, being possessed by the Goddess of sleep. Everyone in the court thinks that Lakshmana's causeless laughter is meant to mock at himself or herself; and feels ashamed. Rama, mistaken like others, however, asks him the reason for his laughter. Lakshmana quickly realises his breach of etiquette and explains to them the story of the Goddess of sleep. They all feel relieved to hear his explanation. Afterwards, all those who have participated in the coronation ceremony leave for their respective places.¹⁵⁶

Bhaskara Ramayanam (BR)

As already stated, BR is one of the popular Ramayanas in Telugu. Though the BR follows VR, one can find in it some deviations from the original. Some of them are given below:

BALA KANDA

1. Brahma informs the Gods that Ravana had been Hiranyakasipu in his previous birth (1-142).
2. Rama is said to have been born on Wednesday (1-167).
3. The sage Gautama curses his wife to become a stone and not a heap of ashes as stated in the original. (1-167).
4. Kausalya and other royal ladies do not participate in the marriage of Rama. Rama pays his respects to his mothers only after he returns to Ayodhya (1-780).

AYODHYA KANDA

1. Reason for enmity of Manthara with Rama has been mentioned (2-52).

¹⁵⁵ RR, p. 574.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, pp 574-75.

2. Story of Kakasura (wicked crow) is narrated at two places (Ayodhya Kanda and Sundara Kanda-2-292 and 5-155).
3. The name of that unfortunate lad who has been killed by Dasaratha is not given. He is just mentioned as *munikumara*.

ARANYA KANDA

1. Lakshmana, encouraged by the sages, kills Jambukumara, the son of Surpanakha. (3-118).
2. Sita laughs at Surpanakha and so the latter grows wild against the former (3-150).

KISHKINDHA KANDA

After seeing her husband killed by Rama, the grief-stricken Tara curses Rama to the effect that he also should suffer the pangs of separation from his beloved wife (4-305).

SUNDARA KANDA

When Ravana attempts to kill Sita, Dhanyamalini, one of his wives, interferes and averts the tragedy (5-302).

YUDDHA KANDA

1. Nila worships Vighnesvara before the commencement of the construction of the *Setu*. (6-246).
 2. When Rama and others get bound by the net-work of the serpent-arrows, Narada approaches Rama and asks him to remember Garuda (6-625).
 3. The story of Kalanemi is narrated (6-1618 to 1724).
 4. Ravana performs a *homa* in an underground cave (6-1839).
 5. Vibhishana informs Rama that there is nectar in the navel of Ravana (6-2170).
 6. Angada drags Mandodari on the ground (6-1869).
 7. Mandodari tells Ravana about the greatness of Rama (6-1878).
- The above will reveal that BR also presents some deviations from the original and that some of them are found in RR as well.

Conclusion

Both RR and KR are faithful to the original, though they contain some details and episodes which are not narrated by Valmiki. Since some episodes like the story of Kalanemi or the account of Sulochana are available in the North-western recension of VR and the *Ananda Ramayana*, it may be said that the different versions of VR may have been consulted and the poets may have included in their works such details or stories which had gained popularity in their respective regions. It is also worthy of note that both RR and KR give almost parallel accounts of some episodes. But RR contains more episodes which are not narrated either by Valmiki or Kamban. The fact that these episodes are available in folk-songs also shows that they have become more popular with rural folk who represent the real emotions of the people. It may also be said that these extra details may have been narrated by the poets in the hope that they would satisfy the reader. In fact, episodes like the *sahagamana* of Sulochana and the account of Hiranyakasipu enhance the value of the story also. Above all, it may be said that both RR and KR depict ably the idea of the universal brotherhood. Vibhishana representing the *rakshasas*, Hanuman belonging to the monkeys, and Guha, a boatman living in the forest—all have been admitted in to the family of Rama. Further, they speak of Rama as the very incarnation of the Supreme God and describe him as the brother of Vibhishana, Hanuman and Guha. Thus, the different characters of the Ramayana story belonging to the different regions of the country appear as members representing one family.

It can also be seen from the above that the Telugu and Tamil versions of the Ramayana present several deviations not only from VR available in its present form but also differ from each other at certain places. It is also worth noting that even the Telugu versions, namely RR and BR, differ from each other at a few places. This shows that either the poets may have followed different versions of VR or they may have consulted other versions of the story, namely the Jain version of the Ramayana, *Ananda Ramayana* and others.¹⁵⁷ Some scholars are of the view that there are

¹⁵⁷ A Gujarati poet by name Girdhar Kavi in his Ramayana has given a big list of the various versions of the Ramayana available in the first half of the 19th century and their authors. The list includes the following authors

differences between the Southern and Northern recensions of Valmiki's Ramayana.¹⁵⁸ As such, it is difficult to ascertain as to which text the Telugu and Tamil poets had followed. However, it can be said that these authors, being South Indians, may have followed the Southern recension. They must have also consulted the other versions of the story which were in vogue in their days.

In this connection, it may be said that these poets may have included in their works some of the interesting episodes which were prevalent among the masses. They may have done so to satisfy them. Further, the original story in Sanskrit may not have attracted the masses much owing to their ignorance of the language. So, the regional language poets may have included the stories as prevalent among the masses even if they are not found in the original. Thus they wanted to satisfy the local tastes and beliefs. Though some modern critics who desire to be too faithful to the original may not like this attitude, this appears to be justifiable from the poet's point of view since he meant his work primarily for the regional readership and audiences. In other words, folk-stories also must have influenced the scholar-poets. Otherwise such interesting episodes as the one relating to a squirrel helping Rama in the construction of the causeway across the sea, not narrated in the original, would not have found a place in the Telugu Ramayanas.

A Sanskrit poet of the 17th century by name Oruganti Lakshmanadhvari has written in Sanskrit an epic entitled *Sitarama Vihara Kavya*.¹⁵⁹ This contains 720 verses in 12 cantos based on the first part of the Ramayana story. It is said that this poet hailing from the Telugu country 'has been influenced by Valmiki, Kalidasa, Bhavabhuti and also Telugu folk literature.'¹⁶⁰ This indicates the impact of folk literature on poets.

In this connection, it may be mentioned that some of the episodes not narrated by Valmiki have also gone to far off places

besides Valmiki: Vyasa, Vasishtha, Sukadeva, Brahma, Hanuman, Agastya, Ananta, Svami Kartika, Dharmaraja and others. (Refer P. C. Divanji's article 'The influence of the Ramayana on Gujarati Literature', *Indian writers at Chidambaram* (P.F.N. Publication), pp. 63-76.)

¹⁵⁸ Mallampalli Somasekhara Sarma in his preface to RR (Rayalu & Co.) p. 16

¹⁵⁹ D. G. Padhye (Ed.), *Sitaramavihara Kavya* (Hyderabad. Sanskrit Academy), 1962.

Also refer: Prabhakar Machwe's review, *Indian literature*, Vol. 10 No. 1 (January-March) 1967, p. 113.

like Burma, Siam and other countries. For instance, in RR it is mentioned that Lakshmana draws seven lines around their leaf-cottage before he goes in search of Rama.¹⁶⁰

In the *Ananda Ramayana* also the above detail is narrated.¹⁶¹ But Lakshmana draws only one line instead of seven lines. This is described in a Burmese version of the Ramayana.¹⁶² Thus according to K. Bharatha Iyer :¹⁶³

'The Burmese stage mostly follows the Siamese version of the Rama story which contains local interpolations. Thus after their departure from Ayodhya, Rama and Lakshmana in this version arrive at the court of a Malayala king who welcomes and honours them. It is here that Bharata meets his two brothers. This brings the Chitrakuta episode very much near to Siam. Again, Rama is not banished at the behest of Kaikeyi as in Valmiki but leaves Ayodhya on the advice of Dasaratha who asks him to seek safety in the forest. In certain other episodes, however though the Siamese version departs from Valmiki it follows one of the more popular Indian versions of the story. Ravana, for instance, appears at the Swayamvara of Sita (Thida) as one of the suitors and tries his hand at the great bow. Similarly the episode in which Lakshmana draws a magic circle around Sita before he leaves her in search of Rama is also taken from a popular Indian version of the story.'

Textual differences in the versions of Ranganatha Ramayanam and Kamba Ramayanam

RR	KR
1. A dialogue between sage Narada and Valmiki is found at the commencement of the poem.	Not found.
2. The story of the Ramayana has been briefly narrated.	Not found.
3. The description of Ayodhya is brief.	The descriptions of the river Sarayu, the Kosala country

¹⁶⁰ RR, p. 177.

¹⁶¹ *Ananda Ramayanam* (Telugu translation), p. 98.

¹⁶² K. Bharatha Iyer, Yama Pwe (The Ramayana play of Burma), *The Times of India Annual*, 1964, p. 22.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

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- and its capital Ayodhya are fairly elaborate.
4. Dasaratha is said to have ruled for several years. He is said to have ruled for sixty thousand years.
 5. Dasaratha himself expresses his desire to perform *asvamedha* and *putrakameshti*. Vasishtha urges the king to perform the *yaga*.
 6. Dasaratha consults his ministers and Vasishtha before performing the sacrifices. He seeks the advice of Vasishtha only.
 7. Suta is said to have narrated the story of Risyasringa to Dasaratha. Vasishtha himself narrates the story.
 8. Vasishtha just appears as a teacher. He is more than a teacher. He is a 'friend, philosopher and guide' to the king.
 9. *Tajnapurusha* arises from the fire and gives to Dasaratha a gold vessel containing the divine food (*payasa*). A ghost arises from the sacred fire and places on the ground a plate containing *amrita pinda*.
 10. Rama is born on a Wednesday. Not stated.
 11. No mention of preparing horoscopes for Rama and his brothers. Horoscopes for Rama and his brothers are prepared. (This is considered as a later addition).
 12. The naming ceremony takes place on the eleventh day. It takes place on the thirteenth day.
 13. There is a brief reference to the childhood of Rama. This is not found in KR.
 14. Rama breaks the leg of Manthara, the maid servant of Kaikeyi. Not stated in the Bala Kanda; but mentioned in the Ayodhya Kanda in a different context.
 15. Indra assumes the form of a cock and crows near the cottage of Gautama and Ahalya. Not found.

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| 16. Ahalya becomes a stone as a result of her husband's curse. | She becomes a stone. |
| 17. The episode of the sage Durvasa cursing Indra is not found. | It is narrated just before the story of Ahalya is told. |
| 18. Indra, after fulfilling his evil desire with Ahalya, leaves the cottage in his own form. | Indra assumes the form of a cat. |
| 19. Gautama curses Indra that his male organ be separated from the body. | Gautama curses that the entire body of Indra be filled with a thousand <i>yonis</i> (symbol of a female organ). Later the sage converted them into thousand eyes. |
| 20. After Ahalya regains her original form, Gautama returns from the Himalayas and worships Rama. | Rama, accompanied by Viswamitra, goes to the place of Gautama and urges him to accept Ahalya as his wife, since she did not commit any evil act willingly. |
| 21. No mention of premarital love of Rama and Sita. | The premarital love of Rama and Sita has been vividly described. |
| 22. The description of the journey of Dasaratha to Mithila is very brief. | This is very elaborate (This is done in about 300 stanzas). |
| 23. Kausalya and other royal ladies do not appear to have participated in the marriage of Sita and Rama at Mithila. | The royal ladies participate in the marriage and Rama pays his respects to them. |
| 24. Bharata and Satrugna are sent to their maternal uncle's house to get themselves trained in different branches of learning. | No such reason has been mentioned. |
| 25. Bharata sends a letter to Dasaratha expressing his desire to see him. | Not mentioned. |

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26. Rama breaks the leg of Manthara (already stated in the Bala Kanda). Rama, as a boy, shoots mud balls against the hunch of Manthara and this is the cause of her enmity to Rama.
27. Rama calls on his father before leaving for forest. Rama does not meet Dasaratha before leaving Ayodhya.
28. The name of that boy who was unfortunately killed by Dasaratha has been given as Yajnadatta. Further, he is stated to be a boy born to a *Vaisya* father and a *Sudra* mother. His name has been given as Surochana. He is called a Brahmin boy.
29. Dasaratha passes away soon after narrating the above story of the boy's father cursing him. Dasaratha breathes his last soon after learning the news that Rama has left for the forest.
30. The episode of the crow is given at two places. The crow is just mentioned as a wicked crow. This is narrated at only one place, namely the Sundara-Kanda. The crow is no other than Jayanta, the son of Indra.
31. Bharata performs the last rites for Dasaratha, as advised by Vasishtha. As per Dasaratha's wish, Satrughna performs the last rites.
32. Guha is described as a tribal king and a true devotee of Rama. He is said to be a chieftain of boatmen. Rama addresses him as his brother.
33. The Goddess of sleep approaches Lakshmana. He asks ~~her~~ to stay with his wife, Urmila, till the exile period is over. Lakshmana asks her to visit him on his way back to Ayodhya. No mention of Urmila.
34. During the meeting of Bharata and Rama, the latter suggests that they must obey the words of their father which A voice of the Gods from heaven is heard to say that Rama would stay in the forest and that Bharata

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- is confirmed by the sages present there and Gods above.
35. The sandals of Rama are placed on the royal elephant.
36. RR is silent about the scholarship of the sage Agastya in Tamil.
37. Agastya gives Rama a divine bow.
38. The episode of Jambukumara, the son of Surpanakha, is narrated.
39. Surpanakha approaches Rama in her original form.
40. Lakshmana cuts off the ear and nose of Surpanakha.
41. Before leaving the hermitage, Lakshmana draws seven lines around it and warns Sita not to go beyond them.
42. Ravana lifts Sita up and places her in his chariot. Thus he abducts her.
43. RR is silent about the banner of Ravana.
44. RR does not narrate the episode of Ayomukhi.
45. Sabari, a female devotee of Rama, gives some delicious
- would rule the kingdom.
- Bharata carries them on his head.
- Agastya has been described as a scholar in Tamil.
- Agastya presents a *Vaishnava* bow.
- This is not found.
- She approaches Rama not in her original form but in a comely form. The Tamil poet has given her a pleasing name too, Kamavalli.
- He cuts off the breast of Surpanakha besides nose and ears.
- This detail is not found.
- Ravana does not touch her, remembering a previous curse. So he uproots the very cottage in which she lives and puts it on his chariot.
- The banner of Ravana has the emblem of *Vinā*.
- In between the account of the death of Jatayu and the story of Kabandha the episode of Ayomukhi has been narrated.
- She offers to Rama some fruits after tasting them

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fruits to him and he accepts them.

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| <p>46. After the death of Vali, his wife Tara joins the company of Sugriva.</p> <p>47. Ravana desires to kill Sita with his sword <i>Chandrasasa</i> when she turns down his request. But Mandodari intervenes and pacifies her husband.</p> <p>48. The dream of Trijata is narrated only after the visit of Ravana.</p> <p>49. RR has no reference to the parrot tended by Sita.</p> <p>50. Ravana attempts to assault Vibhishana when the latter advises to set Sita free.</p> <p>51. In Bala Kanda, it is stated that Hiranyakasipu who was killed by Vishnu is reborn as Ravana. But the story of Hiranyakasipu is not narrated.</p> <p>52. Before leaving Lanka, Vibhishana calls on his aged mother Kaikeyi.</p> <p>53. Rama invokes the blessings of the Ocean God, namely Samudra.</p> <p>54. An interesting episode relating to a squirrel which helps Rama in the construction of <i>Setu</i> has been narrated.</p> <p>55. The sorrow of Kaikeyi at the</p> | <p>herself.</p> <p>Tara is depicted as a saintly woman and a widow after the death of Vali.</p> <p>Though Ravana threatens Sita that he would devour her, he becomes soft when he approaches her.</p> <p>Trijata narrates her dream well before the visit of Ravana.</p> <p>Sita asks Hanuman to remind Rama of an incident — Rama suggesting the name of Kaikeyi for the parrot tended by Sita.</p> <p>This is not found.</p> <p>Vibhishana tells the story of Hiranyakasipu in detail who met his death at the hands of Vishnu in the form of a man-lion.</p> <p>This is not found.</p> <p>Rama invokes the blessings of Varuna who has been called the Ocean God.</p> <p>This is not found.</p> <p>Not found.</p> |
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stubbornness of Ravana has been described.

56. Before the war actually begins, Angada goes to the court of Ravana as a messenger of Rama. Learning that Angada is the son of Vali, Ravana recalls his friendship with his father and asks Angada to be on his side; but Angada rejects the offer.
57. Ravana forgets his enmity to Rama and praises Rama for his skill in archery. Not found.
58. During the net-work of serpent-arrows, Narada comes and informs Rama that Garuda alone could foil the net-work. Then Rama remembers Garuda who comes and foils the net-work of arrows and rescues Lakshmana and others. This incident takes place not at the commencement of the war, but it occurs after the death of Kumbhakarna. Only Lakshmana, Hanuman and others are bound by the serpent-arrows; Rama is not bound by them. Further, there is no intervention by Narada. Garuda himself comes to the battle field after seeing Rama weeping.
59. A straight fight between Ravana and Hanuman takes place after Lakshmana swoons in the battle field. In the fight, Ravana falls down and then Hanuman carries away Lakshmana. A fight takes place between Ravana and Hanuman before Lakshmana's fight with Ravana. As soon as Lakshmana swoons, Hanuman rushes to the spot and carries him away.
60. Kumbhakarna does not appear to be a monster as generally believed. He has some fine qualities in him. Ravana discloses to Kumbhakarna that he has abducted Sita not because of his love or anger for her but because of his Kumbhakarna has been described as a lovable character and a grateful brother of Ravana. The meeting of Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana is moving and quite dramatic.

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desire to have his death at the hands of Rama.

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| <p>61. No mention of false Janaka in RR.</p> <p>62. Before the first battle takes place between Rama and Ravana, Mandodari advises Ravana to give back Sita to her husband.</p> <p>63. As a result of the terrible <i>Brahmastra</i> shot by Indrajit, Rama and others swoon and fell down.</p> <p>64. Sita is brought to the battle field when Rama and Lakshmana are bound by the network of serpent-arrows.</p> <p>65. After the death of Indrajit, Ravana wants to kill Sita, but the incident is averted by Suparsva.</p> <p>66. Episode relating to Sulochana, the devoted wife of Indrajit, has been narrated.</p> <p>67. The story of Kalanemi, a trusted follower of Ravana, has been given. Kalanemi tries his best to put obstacles on the way of Hanuman on his way to bring <i>sanjivi</i> (herb).</p> <p>68. While Hanuman is returning with the herb <i>sanjivi</i>, he happens to see Bharata at</p> | <p>When Kumbhkarna is fighting against Rama, Ravana tries to get the love of Sita with the help of the false Janaka. This incident is found only in KR.</p> <p>This is not found.</p> <p>Only Lakshmana and others swoon due to the missile. Overcome with great sorrow at the sight of Lakshmana and others, Rama swoons.</p> <p>She is brought to the battle field when Rama and others swoon as a result of the <i>Brahmastra</i> shot by Indrajit. Ravana desires to kill Sita at the indirect instigation of Mandodari and the tragedy is averted by Mahodara.</p> <p>This is not found.</p> <p>This is not narrated.</p> <p>This incident is not found.</p> |
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Nandigrama. That night Bharata has a bad dream about Rama and Lakshmana.

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| <p>69. Hanuman meets another obstacle on the way before he reaches the battle field. Malyavanta attacks Hanuman, as instigated by Ravana.</p> <p>70. After learning the news that Lakshmana has regained his senses, Ravana approaches his teacher Sukra for some device by which he can kill Rama.</p> <p>71. As advised by Sukra, Ravana performs a <i>homa</i> in an underground cave.</p> <p>72. Before Ravana fights his final battle with Rama, Mandodari tells her husband of the greatness of Rama.</p> <p>73. Rama is perplexed at the arrows shot by Ravana. Then the sage Agastya comes and asks Rama to chant the <i>Aditya hridaya</i>.</p> <p>74. As new heads and hands grow on Ravana whenever they are cut, Rama is perplexed at this strange feature and then Vibhishana makes a disclosure (Ravana's navel containing nectar) which</p> | <p>After Lakshmana swoons and falls down in the battle-field Hanuman is urged to bring the herb, <i>sanjivi</i> before Rama sees his brother in that condition. Accordingly, Hanuman brings the herb. The poet has not described Hanuman's fight with Malyavanta.</p> <p>Ravana does not approach Sukra but goes to his council room for further consultation.</p> <p>This is not stated.</p> <p>This is not found. Ravana worships Siva and then goes to the battlefield.</p> <p>Not found.</p> <p>This is not stated. Rama aims at Ravana the <i>Brahmastra</i> chanting a <i>mantra</i> and it kills Ravana.</p> |
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finally brings the ruin of Ravana.

75. Rama and others are happy at the victory over Ravana. Rama is at first unhappy over the victory since he sees a few cuts on the back of Ravana. So he thinks that Ravana is already a defeated warrior. But his doubt is cleared by Vibhishana.
76. Vibhishana performs the final rites for Ravana, as suggested by Rama, after the wives of Ravana retire. Mandodari also passes away in the battle field after seeing the dead body of her husband. Vibhishana performs the last rites for both Ravana and Mandodari.
77. After hearing from Hanuman the happy news of Rama's victory over Ravana, Sita is in a dilemma as to the fitting reward to him; but he is satisfied with her affectionate words. Sita asks Hanuman for his suggestion, if any. Thereupon, he requests her to allow him to serve her which is granted.
78. Rama instals an idol of Siva at Rameswaram to ward off the sin committed by him in killing Ravana, a Brahmin. Tamil scholars feel that this passage is a later addition.
79. The wives of the monkeys do not accompany Rama on the way to Ayodhya. At the request of Sita, the wives of the monkeys also join the company of Rama.
80. As Rama does not turn up as promised, Guha prepares for self-immolation but Hanuman comes in time and averts the incident. The happy news of Rama's victory is just conveyed to Guha and then Hanuman leaves for Nandigrama.
81. Bharata and Satrugna decide to put an end to their lives since Rama has not turned up as expected. Kausalya and other royal ladies urge Bharata not to enter fire. Their advice falls on deaf ears. But the incident

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Meanwhile, Hanuman is averted by Hanuman.
conveys the happy news of
Rama's return to Ayodhya.

82. Only after Rama's advice, Guha discards the dress of the ascetics. This detail is not found.
83. The coronation takes place under the guidance of Vasishtha, Jabali and other sages. Vasishtha places the crown (on the head of Rama) which has been given to him by the ancestors of Chadayappa, the patron of Kamban.
84. Hanuman, Vibhishana and others dine with Rama. Then Hanuman distributes to the other monkeys the food, left out in the plate of Rama. This detail is not found.
85. 'The laughter of Lakshmana' (Lakshmana abruptly laughs in the court of Rama which creates a stir among the dignitaries present) is narrated in detail. This is not given.

Chapter VI

Delineation of Characters

An attempt is made in the following pages to sketch briefly the delineation of some of the characters in the story of the Ramayana.

It is a fact that Valmiki himself has set the stamp on the different characters of the Ramayana. The original author can create characters because he moulds the story according to his ability. If he wants, he can paint some characters in brighter colours. But this is not the case with the translators or those who re-tell the story. The first and foremost duty of the translator or the re-teller of a story is to reproduce the original in his own words without sacrificing its beauty. In the case of the translator, it is more difficult because he has no freedom; but a story teller can take some liberties and narrate the story in such a way that it could appear like another original work. In short, the translator or story teller has got his own limitations in narrating the story and that it is somewhat difficult for him to create characters.

A close study of KR and RR will reveal that Kamban and Buddha Reddi have tried to attribute some more noble qualities to the different characters of the story and thus they are able to throw fresh light on the characters already created by Valmiki.

Dealing with the delineation of characters in KR, V. V. S. Iyer has remarked that Kamban has drawn the lines with a firm hand and 'the characters are painted with such accuracy and fullness that from any single sentence, and sometimes even from a single phrase in a speech one can tell the person speaking without any the least doubt'.¹ He further says that in Kamban's hands

¹ *Kamba Ramayana — A Study*, p. 44

the grand characters of Valmiki have become even grander. This is true in the case of the Telugu poet also who, in his own way, has tried his best to attribute some more noble qualities to the characters, while remaining faithful to the original at the same time.²

SURPANAKHA

The episode of Surpanakha is brief in Valmiki. But it is somewhat elaborate in both RR and KR.

Surpanakha in RR appears before Rama in her original form. Though she is angry with him on account of her son's (Jambukumara) death, she falls deeply in love with Rama at the very first sight. Thus, the womanly passion in her has softened her anger. This appears to be a dramatic change in her approach to Rama. As in the original, she is tossed between Rama and Lakshmana, to be finally disfigured by the latter.

Thus we find in RR two different aspects in the character of Surpanakha. The first one is that she wants to wreak vengeance on the person who had killed her son. Hence her approach to Rama is justifiable and the vengeance harboured against him is also understandable.

But when she becomes a different person with nothing but animal passion in her, she loses the sympathy of the reader. Thus RR has well brought out these two aspects in her.

In KR, we find Surpanakha approaching Rama not in her ugly form, but in an attractive guise. Not only does Kamban give her a comely form but also a sweet name, Kamavalli. As soon as she sees Rama, the animal passion in her wakes up. She expresses her passion for him in several words; Rama is silent and merely laughs at her. But when he notices her animal passion, Rama asks her to go away from the place. He also warns her that his brother is short of temper and would be terrible if he is.

² Masti Venkatesa Iyengar feels that Valmiki's version is superb. He says as follows:

'Many a poet repeated the story in his own words in Sanskrit and in the provincial languages. The poem has been put into various non-Indian languages also. The material has thus been repeated by many poets and repeated often; yet, it cannot be said that the story has been better told by any one than by Valmiki.'

The Poetry of Valmiki (Bangalore, Jeevana Karyalaya), 1940, p. 1.

provoked. Even after this warning, she cannot control her passion and hence comes to Rama's hermitage the next morning. She wants to seize Sita, who according to her, is an obstacle in her way. When she tries to carry her away, Lakshmana comes to the scene and averts the incident. On seeing him, Surpanakha resumes her ugly form and attacks him with no success. What is worse, she loses her nose, ears and breast. Thus she is punished (this is the punishment she gets in KR) for her beastly lust.

The above incident clearly brings out the fact that Surpanakha approaches Rama with evil intent and that she receives a deserving punishment. We also see Rama as the true husband who will not fall a prey to animal passion or attractive physical form. Thus, Kamban has highlighted the greatness of Rama with a firm belief in monogamy.

TARA

Both RR and KR have depicted Tara, the wife of Vali, in bright colours. She is painted in even brighter colours in KR.

After Vali has been killed by Rama, Tara is represented in KR as a saintly woman. She does not join Sugriva and thus she remains loyal to her husband, Vali, even after his death.

In Valmiki, she is described as a beloved of Sugriva, after the death of Vali. True to the original, RR and other Telugu versions have said the same thing about her.

Though Kamban has deviated from the original in this regard, his change is justifiable. Looking at her widowed dress, even the terrible Lakshmana becomes softened and he remembers his own widowed mother. Later, Tara, with her tactful words, completely pacifies him. From this, it may be said that Kamban's deviation is meaningful.

We find Tara in both KR and RR as a woman of tact and wisdom. She realises that Rama is an incarnation of Vishnu. In RR, she dissuades Vali from the fight against Rama; but she cannot prevent the fight.

Judging from the above, Kamban's Tara appears to be a noble character. She is wise, farsighted and tactful. Above all, she is a chaste woman who renounces worldly pleasures after the death of her husband.

SULOCHANA

Sulochana is one of the memorable women characters in the Ramayana. She is depicted in bright colours in RR.

Sulochana, the daughter of Adisesha, wife of Indrajit and the daughter-in-law of Mandodari, is definitely a woman of great qualities, rarely found among the *rakshasa* women. Her dauntless spirit in getting back the dead body of Indrajit and her determination to put an end to herself after the death of her husband mark her out as a chaste wife. Even the great Ravana is astonished when she brings back the dead body of his son from the battle field. She knows, well in advance, of the downfall of Lanka and hence sends her sons to her father for safety which only shows her practical wisdom and far-sightedness.

In conclusion, it may be said that Sulochana is a woman of wisdom, of sharp understanding and above all, of chastity. Though she is a minor character in the story, she is great in her own way and could, perhaps, be compared to Sita regarding the virtue of chastity.

KAIKESI

Another minor character depicted only in RR is Kaikesi, the aged mother of Ravana. Though born among demons, she has fine qualities in her. She knows the greatness of her son; but she anticipates the destruction of Lanka and of the *rakshasa* race on account of his abduction of Sita, a chaste woman. Prompted by this, she even goes to the council room of her son despite her very old age and enlightens him on the greatness of Rama. She also gives him a vivid description of the deluge which would occur after the destruction of the world. She tries her best to prevent the fight between Rama and Ravana. As she finds her son adamant in his resolve to fight it out with Rama, she retires to her place, concluding that it is all pre-destined and hence her son would not hear her.

It is clear from RR that she wants to avert the conflict between Rama and Ravana in the hope that the demon race could be saved from total destruction; and so her desire is not selfish. This is a clear proof of her noble impulse.

MANDODARI

According to tradition, Mandodari, the wife of Ravana, is one of the five chaste women. Her chastity has been well depicted in KR.

After seeing the dead body of Ravana in the battlefield, she weeps all the while eulogising his greatness. There have been innumerable arrows on his body. It makes her remark whether Rama has planted those arrows in Ravana's body to know how deep his love for Sita has gone. This is a touching reference and it also reveals the fact that a terrible fight has taken place between Ravana and Rama. Later, Mandodari, overcome with great sorrow, breathes her last. Thus KR has painted her as a true and chaste wife who dies as soon as she comes to know of the death of her husband.

RR too has depicted her as a loyal and faithful wife of Ravana. After realising the greatness of Rama, she advises her husband not to fight with Rama but to give back Sita to him. She is fully aware of the impending calamity to the *rakshasa* race. It is interesting to note that the same Mandodari has asked Ravana to go to the battlefield once again when he is defeated in the battle. While goading him to do so, she asks him why he should bring Sita to Lanka when he has not got the courage to fight with Rama. It is obvious from this that Mandodari is a well-wisher of Ravana and at the same time, has a keen sense of honour and self-respect.

SITA

Sita is not only an important character in the Ramayana but also a memorable woman. In fact, the Ramayana narrates her story in detail and hence the poem is called *Sitayascharitam* (the story of Sita).

Following VR, both RR and KR have described Sita as a paragon of beauty and a pure and chaste woman. They have also given some more details which paint her in the brightest hues.

In KR, Sita is depicted as a perfectly pure woman. Ravana does not touch her even though he abducts her. She does not even taste the water in Lanka though she is kept there in the *Asoka* garden. She drinks only the water from the well dug by

Lakshmana, since Ravana uproots the very cottage in which Sita and Rama live (along with the earth on which it has been erected).

Though Sita is forced to live in Lanka in the company of the *rakshasa* women, her mind is always Rama-centered. She is only worried as to how Rama would serve his guests without her assistance. Thus, a devoted wife has been depicted in her character.

Kamban's Sita appears to be a grateful woman. While Rama and his company return to Ayodhya in the divine aircraft, *pushpaka*, it touches Kishkindha on the way. Then Sita urges her husband to take with them the *vanara* ladies also. This brings out her gratefulness to the *vanaras* who have assisted Rama in his war with the demon-king.

Above all, Sita in KR appears as a woman of austerity during her stay in Lanka. Through the episode of fake (*maya*) Janaka, Kamban has well described her spotless devotion to her husband and her chastity. Thus she is depicted as an ideal and a devoted housewife. Still Kamban now and then reminds us that Sita is the incarnation of Lakshmi.

It is clear from RR that Buddha Reddi has tried his best to depict Sita as a pure and chaste woman.

As soon as Sita comes to know the evil intent of Ravana who approaches her in the guise of a mendicant, she trembles at his words. Not only does she keep her balance of mind, but also treats him as an insignificant person. Then looking at a blade of grass, she warns him of his evil desire. When she is being carried away by Ravana, she addresses Rama and urges him to save her honour by rescuing her from the clutches of the wicked Ravana. This incident depicts Sita as a pure and chaste woman.

Her devotion to Rama and her firm resolve to turn a deaf ear to the entreaties of Ravana despite his harsh words and threats are well described in RR. When Ravana approaches her in the *Asoka* garden to her surprise and sorrow, Sita concentrates all her thoughts only on Rama. Though Ravana and the *rakshasa* women attending on her speak ill of Rama, Sita is not at all perturbed; on the contrary she tells them that she cannot leave Rama as light will not leave the sun and the moon.

Though Sita has been described as a woman of chastity and of firm resolve as well as a devoted wife, she is also at times short-tempered and hasty as depicted in the RR which has followed

the original faithfully. When she uses harsh words at Lakshmana who at first does not go in search of Rama even after hearing the cries of 'O! Lakshmana', Sita may appear as a woman who loses her temper quickly. However, there are some modern critics who would defend her action.³

Thus, both KR and RR have depicted Sita as the most perfect woman and as a paragon of virtue.

KUMBHAKARNA

It is a well-known fact that the name of Kumbhakarna is a synonym for long sleep. But RR and KR have described him as a lovable character.

The most significant trait in Kumbhakarna is his loyalty to his brother and king Ravana. Even at a critical period, he does not desert him. He knows fully well that Ravana would meet with his death at the hands of Rama. Still he remains loyal to him.

Before going to the war, Kumbhakarna meets Ravana. He advises him to give Sita back to Rama and stop the war. On hearing this, Ravana grows wild and says that he himself would go to the battle field. Then Kumbhakarna says in KR that he would go to the battle field, but he would not return. This reply moves Ravana to tears. In the battle field, he meets his brother Vibhishana; and an interesting dialogue takes place between them. This dialogue brings out the greatness hidden in Kumbhakarna. According to KR, he advises Vibhishana to go back to Rama and stay with him; but he would fight with Rama on behalf of Ravana. He further says that he should not desert him at the critical moment because Ravana has reposed great confidence in him, and has fed and looked after him throughout his life. This single remark is enough to speak volumes of Kumbhakarna's loyalty to Ravana. Thus KR has given a good picture of Kumbhakarna.

³ 'At the first glance one wonders why this woman (Sita) said such extraordinary words to her husband's brother. But if we realise the time and the circumstances we understand that it was not possible for Sita to say anything else to Lakshmana.'

(*The Poetry of Valmiki*, p. 145).

In RR also, we find an interesting dialogue between Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana in the battle field. Though this is not found in the original, this deviation has helped the poet to describe him in bright colours. Vibhishana comes to fight against Kumbhakarna. Then he advises his brother not to fight with him and that he should stay in the camp of Rama so that at least one would survive to look after the welfare of the *rakshasa* race.

Thus we get a very good picture of Kumbhakarna in both RR and KR.

VIBHISHANA

Vibhishana is one of the controversial characters in the story of the Ramayana. Some call him a traitor to his brother; while others defend his action in joining the camp of Rama.

In RR, Ravana is not happy with Vibhishana when he advises him to give Sita back to Rama. Displeased with his advice, Ravana assaults him in the council hall and afterwards Vibhishana leaves the place. Finally, he leaves Lanka after reporting the matter to his aged mother Kaikesi and getting her approval to join the company of Rama. From the above, it is clear that Vibhishana leaves the service of Ravana as he has been insulted by him, and this, perhaps, justifies his action. Moreover he feels that his presence in Lanka would not serve any useful purpose either to him or to his brother Ravana. Judging from this, it can be said that RR has justified the defection of Vibhishana.

Though KR does not say that Ravana beat Vibhishana in the council hall, still it has mentioned that Ravana is dissatisfied with the frank advice given by him. Ravana threatens that he would kill him if he were to advise him thus once again. So he leaves the court of Ravana and joins the camp of Rama. Thus KR also has justified the action of Vibhishana.

It is true that Vibhishana discloses to Rama a few secrets which finally lead to the death and destruction of Ravana and his followers. In RR, Vibhishana informs Rama that there is nectar in the navel of Ravana and that he would be killed only if it is dried up. Here one may not quite commend the action of Vibhishana; but that is the story.

Both RR and KR have described the sorrow of Vibhishana when Ravana is killed in the battle. According to KR, he performs

the last rites for both Ravana and Mandodari. It is significant to note that Kumbhakarna, Mandodari and other characters in the Ramayana speak of Vibhishana as a good man.

RAVANA

Next to Rama, Ravana is the leading figure in the story of the Ramayana. A mighty warrior, a great ruler, Ravana is a terror to all, including the Gods. It is said that he has kept the five elements under his control. Both RR and KR have depicted him as a great hero. But his greatness has been shadowed by his tragic flaws and weaknesses; and hence Ravana is generally regarded as a wicked man.

Kamban has depicted him as a lover of music. He is said to have approached Sita, chanting the *Vedas*. He has the *vina* emblem on his banner. When the crying Surpanakha enters the audience hall of Ravana to report to him about her disfigurement by Lakshmana, it is said that the sweet sounds of the *vina*, the *mridanga* and other musical instruments are hushed. All these show that Ravana is a lover of music and this is definitely a quality worth mentioning in him. This interesting detail has not been given in RR or in the other Telugu versions of the Ramayana.

Ravana is a great devotee of Siva. It is said in KR that he bows to Siva before leaving for the battle field. He is also well versed in the *Vedas*. It is a pity that such a God-fearing and learned man has one fatal weakness in his character, namely, the unholy passion for other women, which finally leads to his ruin.

According to KR, it is only through Surpanakha, he comes to know of the exquisite beauty of Sita and afterwards he develops in himself a great passion for her. At one stage, the poet remarks that Ravana has imprisoned her in his heart even before she is brought to Lanka and imprisoned there.

In KR, we also find a moving reference to the strong fight that Ravana puts up against Rama. The remark of his wife Mandodari that several arrows have pierced through his body shows that the fight between him and Rama has been a terrible one. Thus we have in Ravana a worthy opponent to Rama. But he has no compassion in him. Kamban describes a *rakshasa* as a person having no compassion.⁴

⁴ KR, 3-8-71.

In RR also Ravana has been mentioned several times as a great warrior who has defeated even the Gods. Though he first thinks that Rama is not an equal opponent to him, he realises his greatness as an archer when Rama shoots an arrow and removes the necklaces of the women attending on him without causing any injury to them. This makes Ravana forget his enmity against Rama for the time being and begin to praise him as a sportsman. He even calls him *Viragraganya* (the first among the heroes). He also says that a great archer like Rama would not be found in any world. After hearing the praises of Ravana, his ministers try to dissuade him from doing so. 'Then Ravana retorts, 'should not the greatness of the mighty heroes be extolled?' This remark of Ravana brings out his large-heartedness and his appreciation of his worst enemy even, if he was found superior to him. Thus RR has given a very nice picture of Ravana. We also get a good picture of the palace of Ravana which is inhabited by wise ministers, persons of good conduct and others.⁵

Though Ravana abducts Sita and tries his best to win her love, we find that he is not at all interested in her; but he wants to get salvation at the hands of Rama. According to RR, when Kumbhakarna tells him about the greatness of Rama, Ravana remarks that he too knows that Rama is an incarnation of Vishnu. Still he keeps Sita in Lanka in the hope that he would fight against Rama and meet his death at his hands. At another stage also, Ravana says that if he should be killed by the darts of Rama, he would attain the abode of Vishnu, namely, Vaikuntha. Why should he then aspire for Lanka and even Sita? This remark also clearly shows the mind of Ravana and his desire for attaining salvation from Rama. Thus the Telugu poet has described Ravana not as a monster but a mighty warrior, a large-hearted person and above all, a devotee aspiring for the eternal salvation through Rama.

RAMA

Rama is, undoubtedly, the noblest character in the story of the Ramayana. His respect for elders, love for his brothers, pleasing manners, skill in archery, magnanimity and other qualities mark him out as a great hero and a most lovable character.

⁵ RR, p. 323.

RR and KR have not only described Rama as a great hero but also a God-incarnate. According to RR, Mandodari and other characters realise the greatness of Rama and regard him as the very incarnation of Vishnu. In fact, she explains to Ravana in detail the greatness of Rama and the *rakshasa* heroes he has killed in his previous incarnations. Even Ravana knows well that Vishnu is born on earth as Rama. Still he would not surrender himself to Rama since he wants to die at his hands in the battlefield.

In KR also, we find several references to the divinity of Rama. When Rama and Sita see each other for the first time, Kamban reminds us saying that they are Narayana and Lakshmi before their descent to the earth.

It may, however, be said that Rama in RR and KR behaves like a human being. This human aspect in him is well brought out after learning that Sita has been abducted by Ravana. He could not bear the unexpected separation from his wife and his anguish is well depicted in both RR and KR. In RR, Rama suffers like Lakshmana and others when the powerful missiles *Nagastra* (serpent-arrows) and *Brahmastra* have been aimed at him. Thus Rama is depicted in RR and KR as God-incarnate with human behaviour while Rama in the original is an ideal man with divine qualities.

Rama appears to be a vegetarian in KR. His regard for Kaikeyi deserves special mention. As soon as the marriage ceremonies are over, Rama pays his respects first to Kaikeyi and then to his mother Kausalya. When requested by Sita, Rama suggests the name of Kaikeyi for the parrot that is tended by her.

Rama's compassion for all living beings has been well depicted in RR through the episode of a squirrel which assists Rama in the construction of *setu*. Rama is so moved by the devotion of the squirrel that he holds it in his palm and caresses it. This incident depicts Rama as a person of tender feelings.

In this connection, Tyagaraja's description of Rama as an integrated person is worth quoting. He says that Rama is a person of one word (*oka mata*), one arrow (*oka banam*) and one wife (*oka patni*).

In conclusion, it may be said that RR and KR categorically portray Rama as a divine person who has descended to the earth and experienced sorrows and sufferings like an ordinary man.

Chapter VII

Buddha Reddi and Kamban

Kamban is a great poet in Tamil and he is well-known by the title *Kavichakravarti* (Emperor of poets). The fact that he is held in high esteem by lovers of the Tamil language shows that he richly deserves this title. It is said that the *vritta* metre has attained perfection in his hands. His beautiful imagery, dignified style and devotion to the subject are some of the reasons for the popularity of his immortal poem. As has been remarked, 'Kamban churned the ocean of Tamil and gave ambrosia to the people just like Vishnu (Tirumal) churned the milky ocean and gave the ambrosia to the Devas.'

As mentioned already, Kamban (as also Buddha Reddi) draws his inspiration mainly from Valmiki's poem and develops the story in his own way, incorporating some fresh details or episodes which are not found in the original. Buddha Reddi also does the same. But unlike the Telugu poet, Kamban appears to be a poet having more regard for propriety. The following incident may be cited as an example for this:

Following the original, *Ranganatha Ramayanam* (also BR) describes the first meeting of Ravana and Akampana. Akampana reports to the king about the death of fourteen thousand *rakshasa* heroes including Khara and Dushana at the hands of Rama. He also says that Rama cannot be defeated by anyone, however great he may be. Afterwards, he suggests that if Rama's wife, the paragon of beauty, were abducted, then Rama cannot stand separation from his wife. This suggestion appeals to Ravana and hence he immediately approaches Maricha for help. He warns the king that he would ruin himself if he cast covetous eyes on a chaste and

pure woman. But passion for Sita becomes uncontrollable in Ravana as soon as he has heard the report of his sister, Surpanakha. Again Ravana approaches Maricha for help. At last, he agrees to follow the suggestion of Ravana.

Thus, it can be seen from the above that there is a duplication of events in RR. Kamban, therefore, has dropped in his poem the first meeting of Ravana and Akampana. It is only through Surpanakha, Kamban's Ravana comes to know of the ravishing beauty of Sita.

It may be said that this and other deviations of Kamban have enhanced the value of the story. However, it may be pointed out that some of Kamban's descriptions are somewhat too elaborate, while in RR they are made with some restraint.

Both Buddha Reddi and Kamban appear to be lovers of their languages and their customs. It is a fact that almost all the major works in Telugu contain more Sanskrit words and compounds than Telugu expressions. But RR is a work in which one can find more Telugu expressions and less of Sanskrit compounds. Further, RR is written from the beginning to the end in the *dvipada* (2 lines-couplet) metre. This is an indigenous one and this can be set to music also. It is said of the original as *pathye geyecha madhuram*. Buddha Reddi has, therefore, brought out in his work the lyrical aspect of the original by choosing a metre which could be set to music. The fact that some portions from RR are recited during puppetry supports the view that Buddha Reddi has succeeded in giving a lyrical touch to his poem. KR also reads like a lyrical poem.

While describing the tasty and varied dishes that have been served to the dignitaries present on the occasion of Rama's coronation, the Telugu poet does not forget to mention *patchallu* (thick *chutney*) and *urugayalu* (pickles), the favourite dishes of the Telugus. This gives a Telugu touch to the feast served at Ayodhya.

So also, Kamban, a lover of Tamil land and its language, reminds us of the river Kaveri in his descriptions of Ayodhya and other places. Kamban's Ayodhya appears to have been located at some place on the banks of the Kaveri. He even compares the river Godavari to the river Kaveri. Perhaps, keeping in view the genius of the language, Kamban has translated into Tamil some of the Sanskrit names of the original while some names have been given Tamil forms. The following can be cited as illustrations to the above.

Sanskrit	Tamil
Risyasringa	Kalaikkottu Munivar
Dhumraksha	Pukainirakkannan
Mahaparsva	Perumpakkan
Dasaratha	Dayaratan
Kausalya	Kauchalai

Kamban's delineation of some of the women characters (though differing from the original) deserves consideration. According to VR, Tara joins the company of Sugriva after the death of her husband Vali. RR faithfully followed the VR in this respect. But Kamban's Tara remains a widow and thus she is depicted as a faithful wife of her husband even after his death. According to tradition, Tara is one of the five chaste women. Perhaps keeping this traditional belief in mind, Kamban may have depicted Tara as a widow.

Regarding the death of Mandodari also, Kamban differs from the original. Kamban's Mandodari dies in the battlefield after seeing the dead body of her husband and mourning his death. Thus Kamban's Mandodari is depicted as a chaste woman who, according to the tradition, is one of the five chaste women.

The above points bear evidence to Kamban's faith in the age-old traditions of the country.

Regarding the probable sources for RR and KR, it may be said that the Southern Recension of Valmiki's poem must have been the main source. Since some of the non-Valmiki episodes, as found in RR, are said to have been narrated in the North-western Recension, it may be stated that Buddha Reddi may have consulted other versions of the Ramayana story. He must have also recorded some of the stories based on the Ramayana as prevalent among the Telugu rural folk.

In the case of Kamban, it appears that he may have consulted some Sanskrit works, besides Valmiki's epic¹ and the Tamil versions of the Ramayana story which may have been available in his time.

¹ C. P. Venkatarama Aiyar in his *Kamban And His Art* says as follows: 'We understand from the preface to Kamba Ramayanam that the poet closely heard the story of the Ramayana at the hands of Sanskrit scholars throughout the night, and that on the next morning he gave out in Tamil verses the story he had heard on the previous night. This fact distinctly indicates the analytical and critical faculty of Kamban.' (p. 64).

He appears to be a person of sound scholarship in Sanskrit, besides being a great scholar and master-poet in Tamil. He might have consulted *Janakiharanam*, a Sanskrit poem written by Kumara Dasa, a Sinhalese poet who is said to have flourished in the 8th century A.D.²

Janakiharanam consists of 10 cantos and it describes the story of the Ramayana upto the abduction of Sita. The premarital love of Sita and Rama has been described in canto VII; meeting of Rama and Sita, Rama's description of Sita, love of Sita and Rama—these are some of the main contents of this canto.³ As already mentioned, Kamban also narrates in his poem the premarital love of Sita and Rama. But, it may be said that in the *Janakiharanam*, the love of Rama and Sita has been described after the breaking of the bow by Rama but before the marriage, while in KR it has been narrated well before the breaking of the bow. So, the idea of the premarital love is the only common thing found in these two poems.

According to Kamban, Rama first looks at Sita and she looks at him afterwards. They love each other. At one stage, Rama says to himself that the maid he loves should only be a virgin as his heart goes after her. This reminds us of the well-known *sloka* of Kalidasa beginning with '*asamsayam khsatraparigrahakshma*'⁴. It is worthy of note that the spirit of this *sloka* has been ably conveyed by Kamban in his verse '*akum nalvali ayyuravillai*'⁵. It appears that he has also translated the term '*asamsayam*' as '*ayyuravillai*' meaning there is no doubt.

In KR, Sugriva challenges his brother Vali, after the former is convinced of the prowess of Rama. Vali hears the challenge and he immediately sets forth to meet his brother. But Tara tries to dissuade him from accepting the challenge. To dispel her fears, Vali narrates to her the story of the churning of the sea. It is said that Vali has gone to the rescue of the *devas* and the *asuras*

² *Kumara Dasa and his place in Sanskrit literature* by G. R. Nandargikar, p. xxviii.

³ *Janakiharanam* (with notes in English etc., by G. R. Nandargikar), 1907, pp. 94-107.

⁴ *Abhijnana Sakuntala* (New Delhi, Sahitya Akademi), 1965, p. 15.

⁵ KR, 1-10-147.

Murray & Co., edition of KR gives this verse as '*ekum nalvali.....*' (Bala Kandam, p. 100).

when they could not churn the sea with the Mandhara mountain as the churning rod.⁶

It is significant that the above incident is not narrated either in RR or in the original. But Bhasa in his famous *Abhisheka Nataka*⁷ has described Vali as having churned the sea.

Judging from the above, it may be stated that Kamban may have consulted the Sanskrit works mentioned above. But being a great and original poet, he may have taken only the idea and moulded it in his own way. This is the reason why Kamban's poem reads like an original work, though he has followed Valmiki. The same, perhaps, cannot be said in the case of Buddha Reddi who wishes to be faithful to the original. He has faithfully followed the original and at the same time, he has given some non-Valmiki episodes also.

⁶ KR, 4-5-20.

⁷ B. Venkateswarlu (Tr.) *Abhisheka Natakamu* (Kakinada, author), 1949, p. 11.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The story of the Ramayana, as narrated by Valmiki, has attracted the Telugu and Tamil poets, old and modern, and the story is narrated in every branch of literature from the classical type of *kavya* to the folk song, sung by the unlettered.

This clearly indicates the popularity of the story among the people belonging to all walks of life and that the influence of the Ramayana on the Telugu and Tamil literatures is pervasive, longstanding and continuous.

2. It is worthy of note that in Tamil, a Ramayana was written even in the *Sangam* period. This seems to be the earliest Ramayana written in any of the Indian languages. Though this work is considered as lost, it is significant that some interesting episodes based on the story have been preserved in similes and proverbs and that some of the *Sangam* works contain references to some interesting incidents of the Ramayana story.

3. Even though Telugu does not have a Ramayana written in the earliest times, namely before the 12th-Century, still it is worth mentioning that there are several proverbs and similes relating to the Ramayana story. This shows that the story has been in vogue in the Telugu country from very early times, though it came to be written only in later years.

4. Among the complete Ramayanas available in Telugu, *Ranganatha Ramayanam* written by Gona Buddha Reddi appears to be the earliest. He may be regarded as the author of the poem till we get convincing evidence to the effect that Ranganatha was its author. Perhaps, a poet by name Ranganatha may have assisted him in writing it.

Though some Telugu scholars regard the *Bhaskara Ramayanam* as a faithful rendering of the Valmiki Ramayana, still it may be said that the *Ranganatha Ramayanam* is a popular work in Telugu, read and appreciated by scholars and laymen alike. Some of the fascinating portions of this Ramayana are recited in puppetry (*tolu bommalata*). Another unique feature of this great

poem is the introduction of several episodes which are not found in the original. Further, some of the minor characters like Sulochana are well depicted in this work.

5. The Telugu and Tamil versions do not follow the Sanskrit original in all its details, though they are faithful to the original in respect of the main incidents of the story. In other words, the Telugu and Tamil poets have exercised some freedom in developing the story without sacrificing the spirit of the original. It may, however, be said that at some places both Kamban and Buddha Reddi follow the original very closely; in fact the latter has virtually translated a few passages.

It is also interesting that the old poets in Telugu or Tamil did not attempt any exact translation of Valmiki's epic. It may be said that it was not their intention to translate the Sanskrit epic verbatim, but to give their readers the story as presented in the original. It is only in modern times that faithful translations of Valmiki's Ramayana came to be written in Telugu and Tamil. In Telugu, we find several faithful translations of the original done in verse and prose while translations in prose only are available in Tamil.

6. The human and heroic Rama of Valmiki's poem has been deified in both RR and KR, just as in the other language versions. This appears understandable because Rama had become an *avatar* of Vishnu (God-incarnate) by the time the Ramayana came to be written in the regional languages of the country. The Bhakti movement, as prevalent in those days, may have helped to a considerable degree in popularising this idea. However, it may be mentioned that RR and KR have depicted Rama as God-incarnate with human attributes.

7. It appears that the story of Rama has been greatly popularised in the Tamil country by the Alvars through their soul-filling *pasurams* and that Kamban has given a permanent place to it in the history of Tamil literature through his immortal work. His devotion to the subject, delineation of characters and his exquisite poetry must have made his work popular among the Tamils.

After KR came into light, it is obvious that the Ramayanas written in Tamil before Kamban have been lost sight of. The position seems to be unchanged even in the post-Kamban period.

8. The presence of several Rama *mandirs* (temples) in villages in the Telugu country and the availability of several works in Telugu

relating to the story of Rama show that the Telugu mind is a stronghold of the Rama cult. It is significant that some scholars have regarded Rama as the favourite deity of the Andhras. A distinguished modern Telugu poet has described Rama, of Bhadrachalam as the Telugu deity.¹ The reason for such tremendous popularity for the Rama cult may be surmised as follows:

It seems that the *Vedic dharma* was in existence in the Telugu country from the earliest times. It suffered a setback when Buddhism reached its zenith. But with the downfall of Buddhism in the 6th century A.D.,² not only the *Vedic dharma* but also two of its important sects—Saivism and Vaishnavism—were also revived. Perhaps, during that revival period, the Rama cult must have become popular.

Further, the Telugus in general are *Smartas*, having no antipathy to Siva or Vishnu and Rama is said to have lived for some time on the banks of the river Godavari.

In view of the above, the Rama cult may have attracted the Telugu people more than any other cult.

9. It may be said that the influence of the Jain version of the Ramayana is not found on Kamban, though he is said to have modelled his work on *Jivaka Chintamani*, a Jain work, with regard to style and though a Jain Ramayana is said to have been written in Tamil before Kamban.

10. It is significant that some of the details narrated in RR are found in the Jain version of the Ramayana story and the North-Western Recension of VR. This gives room for doubt as to whether the Telugu poet has also consulted the above besides the Southern Recension of VR and the different *Puranas* in Sanskrit.

11. It appears that Kamban may have consulted some Sanskrit works based on the Ramayana (including the plays of Bhasa and *Janakiharanam*) besides VR. He may have also consulted the Tamil versions of the story of Rama which were available in his time.

12. Both the Telugu and Tamil poets have given some episodes which are not found in Valmiki's poem. They must have recorded them in their works either to satisfy their audiences, who

¹ Viswanatha Satyanarayana, *Kinnerasani Patalu* (Vijayawada, V. Varalakshmi), 1956, p. 60.

² *Telugu Culture*, p. 15.

are familiar with those episodes, or they must have found them in other works based on the Ramayana. The story of Hiranyakasipu, as narrated in KR, and the account of Sulochana, the devout wife of Indrajit as described in RR may be cited as examples.

They have also attempted to paint some of the characters of the story in bright colours. For instance, Kumbhakarna appears to be a lovable character in both KR and RR. The characterisation of Tara as a saintly woman and a devout wife of Vali is superb in KR. RR gives a good picture of the members of Ravana's family. We find among them persons of religious disposition and pure and chaste women.

It may be said that most of the deviations are justifiable since they are meant to add some noble qualities to the characters already created by Valmiki.

13. In KR, it can be noticed that there is a slight shift in the plot at one or two places. According to the original, while Angada is fighting against Indrajit, the latter shoots Rama and Lakshmana with a missile called *nagastra* (serpent-arrows) and both Rama and Lakshmana are ch-ined by it. The jubilant Ravana then orders that Sita should be taken to the battlefield in an aerial car, *pushpaka*, so that she might agree to his wish after seeing the condition of Rama and Lakshmana. Thus Ravana cleverly exploits the situation. This incident occurs at the commencement of the battle.

KR narrates this incident not at the commencement of the battle, but after the death of Kumbhakarna; further, only Lakshmana and others are bound by the serpent-arrows. Rama is not affected by them.

According to KR, Ravana sends Sita to the battlefield when Indrajit shoots the powerful missile *brahmastra* at Lakshmana. As a result of it, he swoons. Unable to bear this plight and overcome with great sorrow, Rama too swoons.

14. Some of the details, as given in the Telugu folk songs, are found to be very close to those mentioned in KR. The following may be cited as an example to this. In KR, it is told that Ravana does not touch Sita but uproots the very cottage in which she lives and puts the same in his aerial car and flies away. These details are not narrated by Valmiki. The Telugu versions RR and BR written by scholar-poets also do not contain these details. But *Samkshepa Ramayanam*, a lengthy folk song in Telugu has it

that Ravana takes up the mass of earth on which Sita swoons and puts the same in his aerial car.

So also, some of the folk songs in Tamil contain some interesting episodes which are not found in KR but narrated in RR and BR.

RR and BR narrate the story of a squirrel which helps Rama in the construction of a causeway across the sea. Tondaradippodi Alwar *alias* Vipranarayana, who flourished long before Kamban, in one of his hymns (*pasurams*) refers to this incident. Though this has been omitted in KR, this story is said to be found in a Tamil folk-song and this is popular even to this day among the Tamils.

From the above, it appears that there should have been some common stories or beliefs regarding the Ramayana among the Telugu and Tamil peoples.

15. It is said that the message of *Kamba Ramayanam* is one of universal brotherhood. In the case of *Ranganatha Ramayanam*, it may be mentioned that it is the possibility of receiving God's blessings through devotion (*bhakti*). Though the poet does not say this directly, he communicates it through Lakshmana in the context of the episode of the squirrel's devotion to Rama and his cause.

APPENDIX I

WORKS IN TELUGU BASED ON OR ABOUT THE RAMAYANA *

<i>Name of the work</i>	<i>Name of the Poet</i>	<i>Nature of the work</i>
Achalatmajaparinayam	Venkatacharyulu, Tirumala Bukkapatnam	Verse (Dvyarthi Kavya- with two meanings)
Adhyatma Ramayanam	Jagadevarayalu, Immadi Nagaya, Kotamaraju Pandarinathakavi, Modukuri Peddana Somayaji, Kanadam Ramakrishna Kavi, Allamaraju Ramamurti, Parasuramapantula Srirama Kavi, Rapaka Suryanarayana Somayajulu, D. Venkatakrishnamacharyulu, Mudumbai Venkatarama, Krishnagiri Venkatasubba Kavi, Velamuru	Verse (Not available) ,, (Not published) Verse ,, ,, ,, ,, Prose Verse ,, Prose
Ahalya Sankrandanam	Venkatakrishnappa Naik, Samukham	Verse
Anargha Raghavam	Timmabhupala, Bijjala	,,
Andhra Valmiki Ramayanam	Tevaperumalayya, T.	,,
Atcha Telugu Ramayanam	Timmakavi, Kuchimanchi	,,
Dasaratharajanandana	Singaracharyulu,	Verse (niroshthya- without labial sounds)
Charitra	Maringanti	Yakshnaganam
Dharmapuri Ramayanam	Seshachala Dasu	Yakshnaganam
Dharatmajaparinayam	Mrityunjaya Kavi, Kottalanka	Verse (Dvyarthi- Kavya-with two meanings)

* This list is not exhaustive.

<i>Name of the work</i>	<i>Name of the Poet</i>	<i>Nature of the work</i>
Dasarathi Satakam	Gopana, Kancherla	Satakam
Dasarathi Vilasam	Latchayya, Krottapalli	Verse
Janaki Kalyanam	Vijayaraghava Nayak, Chirumuri	Yakshaganam
Janaki Parinayam	Jagga Kavi, Kuchimanchi Raghunatha Naik	„
Janaki Raghavam	Krishna Kavi, Betapudi	Verse
Janaki Rama Satakam	Kama Kavi, Mandapaka Konaratkavi, Vaddiparti	Satakam
	Balabhaskarudu, Adidam	„
	Venkateswara Kavi, Velpuri	„
Janaki Satakam	Ramabhadra Kavi	„
Janakivara Satakam	Kameswara Kavi, Jayanti	„
Jnana Vasishtha Ramayanam	Singana, Madiki	Verse (philosophical work)
Kusalavopakhyanam	Gangaraju	„
Lakshmana Vijayam	Ramakrishna Kavi, Behara	(Not available)
Lepakshi Ramayanam	Venkataraya Kavi	„ Yakshaganam
Mairavana Charitram	Madayya Kavi	Verse
Maithiliparinayam	Seshacharyulu, Vedala	„
Nala Yadava Raghava- Panadaviyam	Singaracharyulu, Maringanti	„ (with four stories)
Niroshthya Dasarathi Satakam	Peraya Kavi, Mandapaka	Satakam
Niroshthya Janaki Kalyanam	Ramana	Verse
Niroshthya Ramayanam	Kesavayya, Surapuram	Verse
Niroshthya Suddhandhra Sitakalyanam	Singaracharyulu, Maringanti	„
Ontimetta Raghuvira Satakam	Tripurantakudu, Ayyalaraju	Satakam
Prasanna Raghava Satakam	Narasakavi, Vanguri	„ (The Rama- yana story has been narrated in 200 verses)
Raghupati Satakam	Parvatisvara Kavi, Mandapaka	„
Raghupungava Satakam	Krishna Kavi	„
Raghunayaka Satakam	Subhadrayamma, Madina	„
Raghurama Vijayam	Bhavana Kavi	Verse
Raghavabhyudayam	Chayapati, Chintalapalli	„

<i>Name of the work</i>	<i>Name of the Post</i>	<i>Nature of the work</i>
Raghava Pandaviyam	Surana, Pingali	„ (Dvyarthikavya- with two meanings)
Raghava Rama Satakam	Subhadrayyama, Madina	Satakam
Raghava Satakam	Mallikarjunudu, Mikkili	„
Raghava Yadava Pandaviyam	Balasaraswati, Yelakuchi	Verse (with three meanings)
Ramabhyudayam	Ramabhadra Kavi, Ayyalaraju Venkata Narasimhacharyulu Maringanti	Verse „ (Not available)
Ramachandra Charitram	Mallikarjunudu, Mikkili	Satakam
Ramachandropakhyanam	Tirumalakondayya, Revanuri Venkateswara Kavi, Varanasi	Verse „
Ramachandraprabhu Satakam	Ramakavi, Mandapaka	Satakam
Ramachandra Satakam	Venkatanarasimha Kavi, Paidipati	„
Rama Gitalu	Sivarama Kavi, Nelluru	„
Rama Kathabhiramam	Jannaya Kavi, Anantaraju	Verse
Ramamohana Koravanji	Giriraja Kavi	Koravanji
Ramapanchashatkandamulu	Aypayya, Juluri	Verse
Ramapattabhishekam	Sahaji	„
Ramaraksha Satakam	Parvatiswara Kavi, Mandapaka	Satakam
Ramataraka Satakam		„
Rama Satakam	Satananda Yogi	„
Rama Vilasam	Lakshmana Kavi, Enugu	Verse
Ramayanam	Anantabhupala, Tupakula Annamacharya, Tallapaka Basava Kavi Bhaskara and others Buddha Reddi, Gona Errana Ekoji	Translated the Sundarakanda into prose Verse-Dvipada (not available) „ Verse Dvipada „ Dvipada

<i>Name of the work</i>	<i>Name of the Poet</i>	<i>Nature of the work</i>
	Errana	"
	Ekaji	Dvipada
	Dattatreya, Venkatasubbaraya, Singarnju	Translated into prose; Only 3 Kandas are available
	Mallikarjunudu, Mikkili	Verse
	Molla, Atukuri	"
	Raghunatha Nayak	"
	Ramanna, Chennuru	"
	Satyanarana, Koravi	Verse (Not available)
	Syamakama Kavi	Prose, only 3 kandas are available
	Varadaraju, Katta	Verse
	Venkatasubba Kavi, Devaki	Translated into prose (only 3 kandas are available)
	Venkatachala Kavi, Kundurti	Prose-not available
Ramayana Sangraham	Rangajamma, Pasupuleti	Not available
Ranganatha Ramayanam	Papayya, Paidipati	Prose (based on RR)
Ravanadammiyam	Lakshmana Kavi, Pindiprolu	Verse (Dvyarthi, with two meanings)
Sankhya Ramayanam	Chennu Krishnayya	"
Sarada Ramayanam	Madivyalayya, Matham	Not printed
Satakantha Ramayanam	Bhimakavi, Vemulavada	Verse (Not available)
Satamukha Ramayanam	Linga Kavi and Ganga Kavi	"
Sita Kalyanam	Basavappa, Piduparti	Yakshaganam
	Venkatarama Sastri, Merattur	
Sita Vijayam	Mardana Kavi	Verse
Sitapati Satakam	Ramanna, Saheburana	"
Sitarama Charitram	Suryaprakasa Kavi, Mantripragada	"
Srirama Dandakam	Surakavi, Adidam	Dandakam
Sriramastavachurnika	Venkatakrishnamacharya, Mudumbai	
Suddhandhra Ramayanam	Balabhaskara Kavi, Adidam	Verse in pure Telugu (not available)
Sugriva Vijayam	Rudrakavi, Kandukuri	Yakshaganam
Tatvasangraha Ramayanam	Venkata Kavi, Akondi	Verse
Uttara Ramayanam	Paparaju, Kankanti	Verse
	Kacha and Vitthala Raju	" (Dvipada)

<i>Name of the work</i>	<i>Name of the Post</i>	<i>Nature of the work</i>
	Ramabhattu, Jayanti	Composed the last canto in the Nirvachanottara Ramayanam of Tikkana
	Venkatakrishnamacharya, Mudumbai Tikkana	Dvipada Verse (The full name of the work is Nirvachanottara Ramayanam)
Valmiki Ramayanam	Venkata Kavi, Gopinatham Suryanarayana Somayajulu, D.	Verse Prose
Vasishtha Ramayanam	Vengamamba, Tarigonda Venkataramana, Krishnagiri	Verse „
Vichitra Ramayanam	Gopinatha Kavi	Prose (from Oriya Ramayanam)
Yathaslokatatparya Ramayanam	Peddana Somayaji, Kanadam & others	Verse
Yadava Raghava Pandaviyam	Viraraghava Kavi, Nelluri	„ (with three stories)

**SELECT LIST OF WORKS ON OR ABOUT THE RAMAYANA
WRITTEN BY THE MODERN AUTHORS (TELUGU)**

Adhyatma Ramayanam (1911)	Subhadramma, Mamidanna
Adhyatma Ramayanam (1924)	Nagayamatya, Kotamaraju
Adhyatma Ramayana Kirtanalu	Subrahmanya Kavi
Adhyatma Ramayana Vachanam (1909)	Balakrishna Mudali
Andhra Srimat Ramayanam (tr. VR, 1920)	Seshadri Sarma, Janamanchi
Andhra Tulasi Ramayanam (tr. of from Hindi, Bala Kanda) 1956	Suryanarayana Murti, Mylavarapu
Andhra Valmiki Ramayanam (tr. of VR, 1909)	Subba Row, Vavilikolanu
Ascharya Ramayanamu	Venkata Krishna Sastri, Lakkavajjhala
Atma Ramayanam (1965)	Gurumurti, T. Muluguru
Bala Ramayanam (2 parts, tr. · from Sanskrit, Rajasekhara's)	Tirupati Venkatesvarulu
Champu Ramayanam (tr.)	Rangasayi, Allamaraju,
Dodda Ramayanam (2 vols., 1955)	Venkata Rama Reddi, Dodda
Kamba Ramayanam (tr. from Tamil, 2 Vols. 1953)	Sriramulu Reddi, Putalapattu
Kanda Padya Nirvachana Ramayanam (1911)	Balarama Kavi, Pinnamaraju
Maithili (1955)	Lakshminarayana Sastri, Challa
Manikonda Ramayanam (1955)	Satyanarayana Sastri, Manikonda
Pattabhi Ramayanam (1881)	Sathagopachari
Ramayanasa Sangraha (1918)	Satya Subrahmanyeswarulu (Hari Satyanarayana Sastri and Jandhyala Venkata Subrahmanya Sastri)
Ramayanam (tr. of VR)	Subrahmanya Sastri, Sripada
Ramayana Vimarsanam	Lakshminarayana, Kodali
Ramayana Viseshamulu	Pratapa Reddi, Suravaram
Sangraha Ramayanam	Seshadri Sarma, Janamanchi
Saraswati Ramayanam	Saraswati, Chebrolu
Sitarama Charitra	Suryaprakasa Kavi, Mantripregada
Srimadandhra Vachana Ramayanam (tr. of VR, Ayodhya Kanda) 1951	Subbarama Sastri, Saraswatula
Srimat Ramayana Kalpavriksham	Satyanarayana, Viswanatha
Srimat Ramayanam (tr. of VR, 1887)	Venkata Kavi, Gopinatha
Srimat Valmiki Ramayanam (tr. of VR)	Devaraja Sudhi (Tevapperumallayya, Tanjanaagaram)

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|---|--|
| Sri Dandaka Ramayanam (1948) | Aswattha Rao, Karanam |
| Sri Krishna Ramayanam (1948) | Krishnamurti Sastri, Sripada |
| Sri Gayatri Ramayanam (1921) | (Ed.) Sitaramacharyulu,
Bahujanapalli |
| Sri Raghurama Charitramu (1953) | Venkata Subba Rao, Karri |
| Sri Ramayana Nidhi (tr. of VR) | Kalanidhi, Talamarla |
| Sri Ramayana Saroddharamu | Narasimha Avadhani, Mulukutla |
| Sri Tulasidasu Ramayanam (tr. of
Tulsi Ramayan, Hindi, 1960) | Srinivasa Sarma |
| Subhadra Ramayanam | Subhadramba, Siram |
| Suddhandra Nirvachana Nirosthhya
Kusalava Charitra (pure Telugu,
all verse and without labial sounds) | Venkata Kavi, Matsa |
| Tulasi Ramayanam (tr. from Hindi) | |
| Valmiki Ramayanam (tr. of VR,
1961) | Pera Raju, Nutalapati |
| Vibhrama Raghavam (1925) | Narasimha Sarma, Bhagavatula |
| Vichitra Ramayanam (tr. from Oriya) | Appalaswami, Puripanda |
| Visodhita Ramayanam | Srinivasa Siromani |
| Yoga Vasishtha Ramayanam,
Vols. I and II (1935) | Venkata Krishna Rao, Devaraju
Gopinatha Kavi
Gunpayya Pantulu, Modekurti
Suryanarayana Tirthulu, P. |

APPENDIX II

WORKS IN TAMIL BASED ON OR ABOUT THE RAMAYANA *

<i>Name of the work</i>	<i>Name of the Author</i>	<i>Nature of the work</i>
Adhyatma Ramayana	Balakrishna	Prose (from Telugu
Vacanam	Mudaliyar, V.	by Sitarama Sastri)
Akalikai Venpa	Subramanya	Verse
	Mudaliyar, V. P.	
Anuman Pillaittamil	Arumachala Kavirayar	"
Ananda Ramayanam	Ganapati Sastri, K.	Prose
(Sara kanda)		
Iraghavan Pillaittamil	Kulandai Mudaliyar	Verse
Irama Natakam	Arunachala Kavirayar	Song (based on KR)
	Swaminatha Mudaliyar	Song
Iraman Katai	Alaga Sundaram	Prose
Iramar Vanavasam	Ramalingam Pillai,	Folk song (ammanai)
	Madurai	
Iramayana Akaval	Narayanasami Iyer,	Verse
	Pinnattur	
Iramayana Asvamedha-	Vima Kavirayar	" "
yagam		
Iramayana Balakandasara	Srinivasa Raghava	Prose
Sangraham	Iyengar	
Iramayana Catakam	Sivasankara Iyer	Verse
	Murugesu Chettiar, M.	"
	Kesava Subbaraya	"
	Chettiar, P. M.	
Iramayanac Cindu	Vaidayalingam	Folk-song
	Chettiar, T.	
Iramayanak Kappel	Tirumalaisami	"
	Iyengar, K.	
Iramayanak Kirtanaikal	Muthusami Kavirayar	Song
Iramayanak-Kommi	Ramaswami	Folk-song
	Kavirayar, C	
Iramayanak-Kummi	Venkatarama Iyer	"
Iramayana Oratik	Rajasackhara Mudaliyar	Song
Kirtanai		

* This list is not exhaustive.

<i>Name of the work</i>	<i>Name of the Author</i>	<i>Nature of the work</i>
Iramayana Saram	Srinivasacharya Atreya	Prose
	Muthaiya Mudaliyar,	"
	Cheyyar	"
Iramayana Tarpariya Sangraham	Sabhapati Navalur	"
Iramayanat Tiruppukal	Bala Bharati	Verse
Iramayana Vacanam	Kanakasabaip Pandaram	Prose
	Ramalinga Mudaliyar,	"
	Tirumayilai	"
Iramayana Venpa	Subramanya Iyer,	Verse
	Satavadhanam	"
Iramayana Vina-Vidai	Kasturi Rangaiah, A. C.	Prose
Iramayana Visetarthangal	Srinivasa Raghavachariar	"
Iramayanam	Muthusami Kavirayar,	Drama
	Udumalai	"
Iravanan Kummi	Munisami Mudaliyar, C.	Folk song
Iravananukku Vibhishana	Arumugam Pillai, P.	Verse
Alvar Kuria Butti		
Janaki Parinayam	Duraisami Muppanar	"
Jnana Vasistha Amala	Alavandar, Virai	Verse
Ramayanam		(2,055 verses)
Jnana Vasistha	Arunachala Swamigal	Prose
Ramayanam		
	Sivananda Murti	Verse
Jnana Ramayanam or Adhyatma Ramayanam	Seshchala Pillai	"
Kambaramayana	Duraisami Muppanar	Prose
Arungavipporul Vilakkam		
Kambaramayana Vacanam	Tiruccitrambala Desikar	"
Kamba Ramayana	Elumalai Pillai and	"
Vacanakavyam (2 Vols.)	Padasurama Mudali	"
Mayil Ravanana Katai	—	Prose
Mayilravanana Natakam	Ekambara Mudaliyar,	Drama
	Chenji	"
Maruti Jananam	Srinivasulu Naidu, P.	Prose
Rama Natakak Kirtanai	Bhavanandam Pillai, S.	Song
Ramar Aswamedhayagam	Ramalinga Mudaliyar,	Verse
	Tirumayilai	"
Ramar Patikam	Arunachala Mudaliyar,	"
	Gokulapuram	"
Ramar Sitadevi Vanavasasa	Kandasami Mudaliyar	"
	Narayanaswami Pillai, P.	Folk song
Ramar Talattu	Ratnasabhapati	"
	Mudali, A.	"

<i>Name of the work</i>	<i>Name of the Author</i>	<i>Nature of the work</i>
Ramajaya Tiruppukal	Velu Mudali, C. M.	Verse
Ramayana Akaval	Iyer, A. N.	"
Ramayana Ammanai	Jagarajalinga Gurukkal	Folk-song
Ramayanac Cintu	Subbuswami Iyer, H. T.	"
Ramayana Elappattu	Srinivasa Iyengar, C. P.	"
Ramayanam	Kambar	Verse
Ramayanak Kavadic	Narayanaswamy	Folk-song
Cintu	Pillai, M.	
Ramayanak Kirtanai	Vembu Ammal, Tirukkudantai	Song
Ramayanak-Kummi	Alakia Chockanatha Pillai	Folk-song
	Murugadasa Swami	"
Ramayana Nangaip Pattu	Bhanu Kavi, M. T.	" (ammanai)
Ramayana Nondic Cintu	Balasubramanya	"
	Iyer, P. S.	
Ramayana Oratik	Jagannatha Kavirayar,	Song
Kirtanai (Balakandam)	Tirumalisai	
Ramayana Sangraham	Arunachala Chitti, A.A.R.	Prose
Ramayana Vilasam	Kanda Pillai	Poem
Rama Singarac Cintu ⁺	Tyagappadasa	Folk-song
Ramodantam	Kumaraswami	Verse
	Pulavar, A.	
Sampurna Rama Natakam	Sivasubramugam Pillai,	Drama
	Ekai	
Sitavijaya Vacanam	Sundarachariar,	Prose
	Tirukkottiyur	"
Sugriva Vijayam	Rajagopalan	Verse
Uttarakanda Vacanam	Tiruccitrambala Desikar	Prose
Uttara Ramayanam	Ottakkuttar or Vanidasan	Verse
Uttara Ramayanak	Ananta Bharati Iyengar	Song
Kirtanai		
Uttaramayana Natakam	Ananta Kavirayar	Drama
Vali motca Natakam	Appasami Chetty, Vaisyakulam	"
Valmiki Ramayanam (Tr.)	Venkatarama Iyengar	Prose
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	Srinivasa Iyengar, C. R.	"
	Tatadcalika Tatachariyar	"
	Venkata Narasimhachariyar	"

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Iravananathu matchiyum vizhchiyum	Gnarasambandan, A. S.	,,
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